

RATIONAL and CHRISTIAN
PRINCIPLES

The best RULES of
CONDUCT.

WITH

AN APPENDIX containing a VINDICA-
TION of the AUTHOR from some unjust Censures,
and groundless Aspersions, cast upon him.

By NICHOLAS BILLINGSLEY. *7*

Prov. x. 9.

*He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: but he that perverteth
his Ways, shall be known.*



L O N D O N :

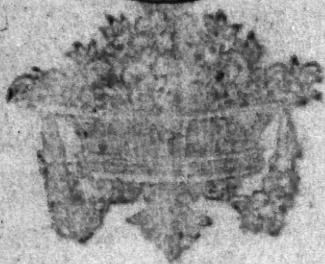
Printed for JOHN CLARK, at the Bible
and Crown in the Poultry, near Cheap-
side. M.DCC.XXI.

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T H E P R E F A C E.

I AM not insensible, that an ill name has been given me by some people, which perhaps may prejudice others against a favourable reception of what is here offered them from a desire, worthy the profession I make, to do them service, in those Interests which ought to be dearest to them. However, I hope they will allow me to make the two following, and, I think, reasonable requests of them. One is, That they will either presently lay aside what is now put into their hands, or seriously consider what they read, and faithfully examine, how far they Themselves are concern'd therein, as remembring that the JUDGE standeth before the door, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and manifest the counsels of the hearts. The other is, That they will not condemn me unheard as to what I have to say in my own behalf.

WHAT I suffer in point of reputation I must ascribe, partly to disgusts taken against some particular instances of my conduct; and partly to false imputations, through mistake, or somewhat worse.

AS to false imputations, I have in some measure done myself justice in the APPENDIX, which contains but a part, and that by far the least melancholly, of what I had drawn up with

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an intention to publish the whole. Had that been done; I think, the vindication of myself would have been more compleat than it is. Nor would the Reader have found a stress laid on any thing as fact, of which I was not fully persuaded, after strictest inquiry and recollection, (where it was needful,) and all possible care taken to avoid mistakes; and of which the evidence was not as clear and undeniable, as could in reason be expected; and such as that which accompanies what I have here taken the liberty of troubling the world with, and as the nature of the thing would admit.

IT was not without great reluctance, and grief of mind (though it was with a clear conscience) that, after long delay, I prepared a larger account of some things that nearly concerned me; which makes it the less an instance of self-denial in me to contract it, by very considerable omissions, rather than the Discourse itself of PRINCIPLES and RULES of CONDUCT; some contraction or other being necessary to avoid exceeding the intended limits of these papers.

I bless GOD, my conversation, with reference to the Laws of CHRIST, has hitherto been so unblemished; and I have so much justice done me, as to my character in that respect, even by the most prejudiced against me; that I presume, none can deny it me, where I am known, without hazard of exposing themselves. Nor can I recollect a single instance, wherein I have been charged with Wrong upon any

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any other occasion, than that of my appearing, when providentially called to it, against the injurious, who loved darkness rather than the light, which would discover them to be so.

AND I can with a great deal of satisfaction review those parts of my conduct, by means of which I have suffered the exchange of a GOOD Name, for this ILL one which I now have, and very much exposed myself, in the opinion of many of my old friends; being conscious, that I have therein acted entirely agreeable to my Principles and Profession, as a CATHOLICK CHRISTIAN, and PROTESTANT DISSENTER.

THEY are, if I know any thing, those very PRINCIPLES, which our Great MASTER Himself taught, enjoyn'd, and practis'd, and His Apostles after Him, in His Name, and in Obedience to Him; and which They, and All that have been Followers of them, as they were of CHRIST, in ALL AGES, down to Luther and Calvin, Baxter and Bates, have needed to justify themselves. They are such, that methinks the very mention of them, should be much to their advantage with well-disposed persons; if one may imagine any such to be wholly ignorant of them, or not to have at all considered them; as I easily do, that NONE are in danger of a too CLOSE and SERIOUS Consideration of them, and that whoever lays to heart the Nature, and Design both of the Gospel, and a Gospel-Ministry, together with the state of Religion amongst us, even in this Christian and Protestant Country, must think it very needful, that

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that they should frequently be insisted on, and upon all proper occasions.

WITH this View, some years ago, on a very solemn one, viz. That of an Ordination at Broom, Sept. 6. 1716. I publicly owned, and recommended them from the Pulpit, and soon after more publicly from the Press.

AS that Discourse met with general Acceptance; particularly among the London Ministers, by whom (as several of them assured me,) it was universally approved, as well as by those in the Country, at whose Request it was published; I think I may in my own defence, appeal to it, as a publick Evidence for me, against those who have defamed me; if they can't prove, and I challenge them to prove if they can, that my Conduct in such instances as they have taken offence at, has not been such as, in my opinion there declared, **THE CONDUCT OF MINISTERS** with Reference to Themselves, and their Doctrine OUGHT to be. For, as when I review'd it, in order to a second Impression, desired by the Bookseller, I could not see reason to retract; so now I must say, that I don't yet see it. And therefore, what my Principles are, as well as what they were, might thence be known, by those that have a mind to know, better than by Common Fame. Those particularly are (I think) there either express'd, or imply'd, which I have here justly acknowledged, and am under the highest Obligations inviolably to observe, as I value His Favour, whose I am, and to whom I must one day give an account of myself; and on which,

as

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As truly Rational and Christian, I now depend, in the vindication of my censured conduct, the fact of which I don't disown; since I know that I have been govern'd by them.

AND, because they appear to me of vast importance to others, as well as to myself, and yet are sadly neglected by almost all sorts of people, and my own defence is neither All, nor the principal Thing I aim at, on the many occasions that have from time to time been given me for it, I have somewhat distinctly considered them, and been careful to set them in as clear, and recommending a View, as I was able.

MY great Design is now the same as formerly: tho' the Occasion, and Method of pursuing it are different. 'Tis a Design so JUST and GOOD, that I hope I shall never see that Day of Trial, in which I shall either be ashamed, or afraid to own it.

IT is no small Satisfaction, to engage in a Cause that neither needs, nor will admit of a crafty management: and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, rather than I should engage in any that does need it!

WHAT ever defects there may be in the Performance, the profess'd, and laudable Design must appear in the Drift and Tendency of it. And if, through the Divine Blessing attending it, Success be but in any measure answerable; abundant amends will be made me, not for my labour only, (which I wou'd not over value,)

lar,) but for whatever ill Treatment I have had, later instances of it in particular, that occasioned this publication, and happen'd through the malice of some, (which like that of Satan, has been incessantly working to sow discord among brethren, and separate chief friends,) meeting, first or last, by ways and means, with too great condescension in others to resign both care, and their understandings to them.

I am persuaded, that this Error of my late friends has been vastly more mischievous to themselves, than it has been, or could possibly be to me. And therefore, I here solemnly profess, and as in the Presence of the Great Searcher of Hearts, my Conscience bearing me witness, that I lie not when I say, that I do in the exercise of brotherly kindness, charity, and the tenderest affections towards them, heartily wish and pray, that they may be sensible of it, and cautious for the future of being imposed upon by ignorant and foolish, though, so far as is consistent with that, crafty and designing men; and involv'd in the guilt of such a temper and practice, as is contrary to the Spirit of CHRIST, and Design of the Gospel; yet alas! too too generally prevailing amongst us. There are various degrees of that Guilt. And the least degree of it, when indulged, may be very prejudicial, and dangerous.

WE cannot be too careful in distinguishing between one sort of zeal, and another: that,

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I mean, which is the Corruption of our Natures; and that which is a grace or christian Virtue: since the one is the best, and the other, quite contrary to it, (I must say, when I speak as softly as I can,) is one of the worst things in the world. So far as either prevails, the one makes an Heaven, and the other a Hell upon Earth. The one is true zeal; and the other a zeal falsely so called.

THAT excellent Man, Mr. Baxter, (though liable to mistake, as the wisest, and best are) in one of his Books written in defence of Catholicism, and on the uniting Design; express'd in the Title, viz. The Cure of Church Divisions; has long ago given this Direction to Ministers, which I would here humbly offer in his words, both to them, and private Christians, who cannot be unconcern'd,
 “ Still remember the difference between
 “ true zeal, and false; and know, that
 “ he that is upright in the main, and
 “ whose zeal for Christianity is sound,
 “ may yet have much zeal that is un-
 “ sound with it.” And he gives several Marks of Distinction; the Recital of which in this place will not, I hope, be unacceptable. Nor will the Quotation be unfair, tho’ I don’t offer them in exactly the same order.

“ **I**T is an ill Sign, when your
 “ zeal is rais’d about some singular opi-
 “ nion, which you have own’d; and not
 “ for

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“ for the common salvation, and substance
“ of the christian faith, and practise : or
“ at least, when your odd Opinion hath a
“ greater proportion of your zeal, than ma-
“ ny more plain and necessary Truths.

2. “ WHEN your zeal is moved by
“ any personal Interest of your own ; by
“ honour, or dishonour ; by any wrong
“ that is done you, or any reputation of
“ wisdom, or goodness, which lieth on
“ the cause: or at least, when your own
“ interest hath too large a proportion in
“ your zeal.

3. “ WHEN your zeal is more for the
“ interest of your Party, than for the
“ Universal Church, and the common
“ Cause of Godliness, and Christianity ;
“ and can be content, that some detriment
“ to the Whole may further the interest
“ of the Party.

4. “ WHEN your zeal tendeth to Hurt,
“ and Cruelty ; and would have God ra-
“ ther to glorify his Justice by some pre-
“ sent notable judgment, than His mer-
“ cy, by patience and forgiveness : and
“ when your secret desire of fire from
“ Heaven, or some destruction to the ad-
“ versaries, is greater than your desire and
“ prayer for their conversion. The SURE
“ MARK OF TRUE ZEAL is, That it is
“ ZEALOUS LOVE. It maketh you love
“ your neighbours, and enemies, more
“ fervently than others do : but false

“ zeal

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“zeal maketh you more inclined to
“their suffering, and to reproach and
“hurt them.

“5. It is an ill Sign, when your zeal is
“beyond the proportion of your Understand-
“ing, and your Prudence, and experience
“is as much less than other men’s, as your
“zeal is greater. True zeal hath some
“equality of Light, and Heat.

“6. It is an ill Sign, where it burneth
“in the same soul, where Lust and Wrath,
“and Pride and Malice burn; and when it
“prospereth at the same time, when the
“Love of G O D, and an heavenly Life
“decay. The zeal of a Sensualist, of a
“proud man, of a covetous man, of a
“self conceited empty person, can hardly be
“thought a spiritual zeal.

“7. It is an ill Sign, when it carri-
“eth you from the holy Rule, and pre-
“tendeth to come from a Spirit, which
“will not be tried by the Scripture; or
“when it driveth you to use Means,
“which G O D forbiddeth in his Word,
“and putteth you upon Ways which the
“seal’d Law, and Testimony condemn.
“It cannot be of G O D, which is against
“God’s Word.

“8. It is an ill Sign, when it is a
“zeal which is easily kept alive; and
“hardly restrained. For that sheweth,
“the Flesh and Devil are too much its
“formers. The true zeal of the Spirit
“doth

"doth need the Fuel of all holy means,
 "and the bellows of Meditation and
 "Prayer, to kindle it; and all is too lit-
 "tle to keep it up in the Constancy that
 "we desire. But carnal zeal will burn
 "of itself, without such endeavours".

I crave leave further to illustrate this last,
 by another Simile. Uncharitable zeal, which is
 a corruption, springs naturally, as thorns and
 thistles, or weeds in a garden. There is no
 need of care and pains, to encourage their
 growth; but there is need of a great deal to
 subdue them, and clear the ground of them.
 'Tis easy to learn rancour, bitterness, and
 prejudice against our neighbours that differ in
 apprehension from us: but, if we would main-
 tain in our breasts that zeal, which is nothing
 else but fervent Love to GOD and our
 neighbour, that Charity which suffereth long,
 and is kind, and is quite Opposite to Cla-
 mour, and Wrath, and Evill-speaking;
 in order to this, we must take Pains with
 ourselves, and be diligent in the use of pro-
 per means; we must watch, and pray, and
 frequently and seriously meditate on those divine
 Precepts and Motives, with which the Gospel has
 furnish'd us, on the nature of GOD, the
 Example of CHRIST, the Work and Bless-
 edness of HEAVEN, &c. That wherein con-
 sists the excellency the perfection and happiness
 of our natures, is not so easily attainable, as
 that wherein consists the corruption and misery
 of them.

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XIII

TWO other Marks are mention'd by Mr. Baxter, which I cannot so well recommend; because I have not the same opinion of them, that I have of the rest. One is, "It is an ill Sign, when some Sect or false Teacher is the kindler of the zeal; and not the sober preaching of the Truth". The other is thus express'd, "It is a suspicious Sign, when it is contrary to the judgment, experience, and zeal of the generality of the most wise, experienced, tried, sober, godly christians; and so to the ordinary workings of God's Spirit in them".

AGAINST both of them lies this Objection, viz. That a Sign should itself be well known: since it is to discover what is more in the dark to us. They that have Truth and Justice on their side, tho' few, and standing in Opposition to the Multitude, may be called and esteem'd a Sect; and a Teacher of Truth in Love a false, and perhaps, a factious Teacher. The Question will then be, What is Truth? which every one must determine for himself. And he must first be convinced, that a man is a false Teacher, before he think the worse of his zeal for his having learnt it of him. Nor, after all, might that be reasonably sufficient to induce him to it; unless it be supposed that he was a Teacher of nothing but falsehood. I must want what we use to call common sense, if I thought that the Force of such arguments, as Chillingworth has offered against the popish doctrine of Infallibility, was destroyed.

proved by the supposition of his being not only fallible himself but actually mistaken in other points. And as little reason can I have to dislike my zeal, if it will stand the sacred Test, because I have been led to it by means of the doctrine, or example of one, whom in many things I think erroneous.

BUT that expression of my Author, viz. sober preaching of the Truth, with what appears in the World, makes me here think of the two very different Ways of a man's preaching, what he takes to be Truth: whether it be really so, or not, alters not the Case.

ONE is sober, calm, modest, humble, and suitable to the design of informing the judgment, and by that means advancing the christian life, and power of godliness, brotherly-kindness and charity amongst the Friends of CHRIST, as all are in his judgment, which is according to Truth, who do whatsoever he commands them. This is the proper Method of kindling true zeal. And they that take it, though as fallible as they own themselves to be, will (whether successful, or not,) have the unspeakable satisfaction, and pleasure that belongs to it. They who thus labour on this glorious Design, may suffer a great deal of reproach, and other ill usage. But in the midst of storms, they have "HEAVEN and Peace within". It is enough for them; that they are some of those, whose praise is not of men but of GOD; and that they shall be abundantly recompenced at the resurrection of the just. Their conduct having so good a foundation for it, (not the sand, but a rock,) will bear the strictest review, they can make

make in their most serious moments, and when the time of their departure is at hand. And, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, all that are true, and faithful to Him till death (and how short is life!) shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

THE other Way of preaching Truth, or what a man thinks to be so, is the reverse of the former; viz. confident, dogmatical, and assuming, rash, and censorious, factious, and uncharitable; when the preacher by his example teaches his hearers pride, and self-conceit, or an overweening opinion of their own penetrating judgment, contempt of, and prejudice against, their neighbours that differ in opinion from them, as fools and blind, or as willful, and resolv'd enemies of the Truth, though making as credible a profession as they themselves make of a sincere love to it, and impartial enquiries after it; upon this wise presumption, that every one who does but fairly consider and examine, must needs see the force of their arguments, and abstract reasonings, used to prove what they sometimes call the plainest things, and at other times abstruse, and inexplicable. When, in neglect of their understandings, the passions of the people shall be artfully address'd, and put into furious transports about they know not what; and those that preach up Charity on the foundation of Christian Obedience, shall be compared to drunken Sots in the streets that cry up the Church; I need not say what sort of zeal must be the effect of such preaching as this, on minds prepared to comply with the design of it, nor whose kingdom is this way promoted.

AS to the last mention'd suspicious Sign of a false zeal; there may be difficulty, and uncertainty in the application of it to particular cases. For, besides that unchristian zealots, as well as their neighbours of a better spirit, may pretend to justify themselves from the judgment, experience and zeal of the generality of the most wise, experienced, tried, sober, godly christians; whom they claim as on their side; it may not be always easy to convince them, that their claim is not just. And it must be confessed, that such is the imperfection of the present state; both as to knowledge, and love; and Men of the most established Characters have, as well as others, upon certain occasions discover'd so much of a mistaken, irregular and unjustifiable zeal; that it cannot be expedient for us to follow any of them blindfold. We must be followers of them, so far onely as they are the followers of CHRIST, and conform to His instructions, and example, who is our MASTER.

I think, a great deal of respect and value is due to the memory of Good Men that have gone before us, and to the fruit of their pious labours which some of their number have left behind them; such as Tillotson and Scott, Baxter, Howe, and the Alleins; who signalized themselves in the Cause of true Religion, and performed gloriously what they severally undertook in the Christian Warfare. These and many others, though they might differ in particular sentiments, were of an excellent spirit. Love to GOD, and the souls of men had the command of all their Powers and Faculties; and made them unwearied in

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the service of both. And I cannot but in a particular manner applaud the conduct of those Reverend Persons, who made it their choice to part with their Livings, and cast themselves and theirs on Providence, rather than violate their Consciences by insincere Declarations, or countenancing an imposing spirit, and encroachments on the Prerogative of CHRIST.

THEIR self-denial, strict piety, and active zeal, for the substantial of religion, and eminent usefulness in their day, have a language of instruction and reproof to us, who are risen up in their room. 'Tis (I presume) past reasonable dispute, that there is an increase of Knowledge in the present Age; And I hope there will be a further increase of it amongst those that shall come after us. But if we have more LIGHT, there may be ground for fear that we have less LOVE to GOD, and one another. And then our greater Light will but make our Guilt be attended with greater aggravations. The Truth is held in unrighteousness; Iniquity abounds; Rational and Christian Virtue languishes; Ordinances are scarce used as Means of Grace, Nor is tolerable care taken to have the End of them answer'd. This is matter of sad Reflection. May we be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die!

BUT, whatever be the present state of religion, compar'd with what has been on this Earth, where Hell has always had a VAST Majority confederated with it, the pious Few that

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that now are, do in some measure walk in the same Spirit, and in the same Way with their valuable Predecessors: And therefore ought not to be set in the view of opposition, or considered as contrary to them, tho' they may have different apprehensions in many things from them, as they had one from another, and from their own Predecessors.

A N D here, to further a profitable remembrance of them, it may not be amiss to observe, what sort of Principles, and Way of preaching it was, that made them so serviceable in the Kingdom of their Lord. Many, or most, of them, were brought up, and lived and died in what we call Calvinism. But for my part, I cannot persuade my self, that This did in its nature contribute to the piety or usefulness of those Reverend Fathers. But I ascribe it to something else, in which they were worthy the imitation of us all. Had they preached nothing but the Calvinistical Doctrine of the Decrees, with all the natural consequences of it; had they never deliver'd any thing inconsistent with it; it is my opinion, that in that case, instead of bringing people to Repentance, and the Love of G O D, they would but have harden'd them against it, and driven them to Presumption, or to Despair. But in their Applications to the people, they constantly represented the Divine Being as the most sincere, and just, and good, and every way most amiable, and as one who had the most compassionate concern for the Welfare of them all. They told them, what
neces-

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necessity they were under, and what encouragements they had, what motives were laid before them, and what assistances were offer'd them for working out their own Salvation, and recommending the search and study of the Scriptures; as Luther had done long before, wishing his own Books might be burnt, rather than divert people from it; And their Lives were exemplary. May the behaviour of us all, both ministers and people, in our respective stations, be as theirs so far (and no farther than) as theirs was rational and christian! So let us be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the Promises.

I SINCERELY lament the scandalous heats and animosities, which have been the fruits of an extravagant zeal about opinions, and different interpretations of Scripture, amongst those that own its Authority, and in the general assert the Right of every one to determine for himself. This sort of Zeal has really sapp'd the Foundation on which we stand, and exceedingly prey'd on the Vitals of our common Christianity. I should be much more uneasy than I feel my self to be, were I under the power of it in my own breast, or as conscious of endeavours to promote it, as I am of having set my self in opposition to it; of which I don't expect forgiveness from some in this world: But my Witness is in Heaven, and my Record on High, my Heart condemns me not, and I have confidence towards GOD; since I am fully persuaded that the cause I have engag'd in is His

MICHAEL B. LINGG

OWN

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own Cause. If it be not, I know not what in
the Cause of That Zeal which is Love, on
the Foundation which CHRIST Himself,
and His Apostles, have laid. I had much rat-
ther be successful in an attempt to prevail with
the followers of that Blessed Lord of ours, to
wear His Badge, by which He would have
them to be dignify'd and distinguish'd, than to
proselyte them to a party, or change their
judgment in a point of controversy.

WHAT follows is manifestly an attempt of
the former kind; in which I have endeavour'd
to commend my self to every Reader's Con-
science in the sight of GOD; for whose Bless-
ing and Providence I humbly resign, and leave it.

THE more I consider the excellent Nature
and Design of the Christian Religion, the more
I acquaint my self with the Bible, and the more
I know what it means practically to submit to it,
I believe, I shall still be so much the more con-
firm'd in the Persuasion, That zeal for Truth
without Love, or against it, has nothing di-
vine, or amiable in it: Especially when I think
of certain miserable Beings, long reserved unto
the Judgment of the Great Day, who ('tis to
be presum'd) have much more Truth and Or-
thodoxy than the Wisest and Best on earth.

The Devils know, and tremble too:
But Satan cannot love.

WATTS

THIS, then, is the Foundation of their mi-
sery: From which may the GOLD of LOVE
preserve us all!

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NICHOLAS BILLINGSLEY.



RATIONAL & CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

The best RULES of

C O N D U C T.



PRINCIPLE I.



OD must be pleas'd rather than
Man; and an ILL NAME chosen,
rather than a GUILTY CON-
SCIENCE; or any kind, degree,
or appearance of sinful evil.

(a) WHETHER it be right in the sight of GOD, to
hearken unto you, rather than unto GOD, judge ye. (b) A Good
name is better than precious ointment, when there is a just
foundation for it, as the reward of virtue, and attendant

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of

(a) Acts iv. 19.

(b) Eccl. vii. 1.

of a good conscience. But it has lost its *savour*, is of no value, and therefore dearly purchas'd, when the Terms are in any measure dishonourable, or unbecoming a Man and a Christian. The offer of such Terms shou'd be treated with a noble Scorn and Indignation: and whatever mean views we may have, nothing but an interest, falsely so called, can engage us to a compliance, of which we shall one day see cause to repent.

PRINCIPLE II.

I must be very cautious of thinking ILL of any one merely for his having an ILL NAME; and without Good EVIDENCE that it justly belongs to him: since an ILL NAME amongst Men is no argument that a Man is not the Friend of GOD and a Favourite of HEAVEN.

As 'tis every ones highest wisdom, however tried, to preserve his Integrity inviolable; so there can be no Juster Claim, than *That* has, at All times, to credit and esteem, amongst reasonable creatures. But they dont always act reasonably, or do justice: we need not wonder, if in such a world as This, in which we live, there should be frequently such junctures, in which the uniform practice of a thing so excellent in its nature, so sacred and divine, and without which all the Grace of the Gospel is received in vain, and of none effect, shall expose a man to infamy, brands and reproaches, if not worse.

So we know it was, when the holy Religion, we now profess, made its first appearance. (a) All that then would live *godly in Christ Jesus*, and not *make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*, must suffer persecution. And hence that blessed Lord of ours, instead of encouraging his Disciples to expect a reputation amongst men by means of their fidelity to him, is careful to set them at the utmost distance from it. (b) *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* And in his discourse of beatitudes and woes, (a) Bless-

(a) 2 Tim. iii. 12

(b) Mat. x. 24, 25.

(a) Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name, as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoyce ye in that day, and leap for joy; for behold your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the Prophets. Such treatment wou'd be evidence concurring with the testimony of their own consciences, that they were faithful, and (b) in simplicity and godly sincerity had their conversation in the world. And, (c) Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets: those that prophesied (d) smooth things to them, notwithstanding their wickedness, and that in the Name of GOD, tho' he had (e) not sent them. Such a good name wou'd be a melancholy sign, or ground of suspicion, that these disciples had been false to their Master, deserted or betray'd his interests, that they had kept back what was profitable, and shou'd to declare all the Counsel of GOD, (f) for fear of offending; that they had flatter'd those with whom they had to do, when they shou'd have shewn them their transgression; (g) or dealt tenderly, rather than faithfully, with those that had wrong'd, and wounded their own souls; or, which is worse, by a mean and base compliance, and falling down the stream, instead of making a noble STAND against it, had encourag'd an evil matter, or some unchristian temper, and practice. He well understood the reason of this, who said, (h) If I yet pleased men, I shou'd not be the servant of Christ.

(i) HIS Kingdom was not of This World; nor were his doctrines and laws calculated to gratify the lusts and passions, the prejudices and prepossessions of men; but to encounter, and subdue 'em. What then must his faithful servants, employ'd in the publication of such holy doctrines and laws, expect? They, as well as their Master, passed thro' (k) honour and dishonour; they pass'd for Deceivers; and yet true; treated as (l) the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, and not fit to live; tho' of them (m) the world was not worthy.

UNBELIEVERS, both Jews and Pagans, charg'd them with Innovations in matters of religion, which neither they, nor their fathers and wise ancestors had ever heard of; a New and Strange Doctrine, which therefore they rejected, and abhor'd, without ever seriously examining the evidences offer'd in its

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favour;

(a) Luke vi. 22, 23. (b) 2 Cor. i. 12. (c) Luke 6. 26. (d) If. xxx. 10, (e) Jer. xxiii. 21. (f) Acts xx. 23, 27. (g) If. lviii. 1. (h) Gal. i. 10. (i) John xviii. 36. (k) 2 Cor. vi. 8. (l) 1 Cor. iv. 13, (m) Heb. xi. 39.

favour; if they so much as understood the nature of the doctrine itself; which was not always the case: for we find some wise enough in their own conceits, representing the Apostle as (a) a *setter forth of strange Gods*; because he preach'd unto them, *Ἰησοῦ καὶ Ἀναστάσεως*, *Jesus and the Resurrection*. Hence, preaching the Gospel, then call'd *Heresy*, was, as it prov'd, like *casting pearls before swine, who trample them under their feet, and turn again with brutal fierceness on those that ventur'd so to cast them*.

AMONGST the Jews, the Sadducees were offended at the doctrine of Any resurrection, and the Pharisees as well as they at that of the resurrection of JESUS; and were therefore inveterate enemies to the preachers of it, and employ'd their utmost industry from place to place, (b) in incensing against them all they cou'd have influence upon, both among Gentile proselites, (those of the weaker sex, (c) *devout and honourable women* not excepted,) and the Pagans (d) whose ears were no less offended at the doctrine, that (e) *they be no Gods, that be made with hands*, and that they shou'd (f) *turn from idols, their false, and many Gods, to serve the One only Living and True God*. And yet, as is the custom of Persecutors in all ages, they represented those they persecuted, as Troublers of the world; and so painted and exposed them to the weak and already prejudiced, that *saw as if they saw not*, in the colours which were manifestly their own: as that wicked King *Ahab* long before cou'd say to the prophet, (g) *art thou be that troubleth Israel?*

To the devout of their own religion the Jews represented them as Blasphemers of their Temple, and Law, of Moses, and of GOD (h): tho' indeed they taught, what was the end, and fulfilling of the law, sought the honour of GOD, and honoured Moses as his (i) *faithful servant*, but wou'd not allow him equal honours with the SON, who was in the church, as *his own house*, being the *appointed Heir of all things*; and so worthy of more honour, not than Moses only, but than *Angels*, as having by inheritance obtain'd a more Excellent Name than they.

To incense the Gentiles, and Romans against them, they represented them as men of factious and seditious spirits; that wou'd embroil the state, and run all into confusion; as enemies to the government, who despis'd, and violated the laws, and edicts of *Cæsar*, and were carrying on a traiterous

(a) *Acts* xvii. 18. (b) *ver.* 13. (c) *Acts* xiii. 30;
(d) *Thef.* i. 9. (e) *Acts* xiv. 2-5-19. (f) *Acts* xix. 23-26-28,
29-34. (g) *1 Kings* xviii. 17. (h) *Acts* vi. 10-14.
(i) *Heb. eb.* i. & iv. design

design against him, in favour of one Jesus, a Pretender to his crown and dignity. Yet they well knew that our Jesus, and his followers in His Name, disclaim'd all pretensions to an Earthly Crown; and that *the weapons of their warfare were not carnal*; that they taught submission and obedience to the Powers that then were, for conscience sake. They knew that the very reason that determin'd their nation to reject him was, that he wou'd *not* be made a King in opposition to *Cæsar*: whereas, if he wou'd in That have answer'd their expectations; no doubt, the twentieth part of his miracles wou'd have been signs abundantly convincing to them, that the time of their glorious deliverance was at hand; and parents, as well as their children, wou'd have welcom'd him with an UNIVERSAL HOSANNAH; tho' he had been no better than Barabbas. (a) *They were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit, with which these first publishers of the Gospel discharg'd their trust.* Reason and argument fail'd them: they must therefore have recourse to something else, to maintain their cause, tho' that which indeed must have made it, if it had been good, appear as a bad one to the confederate part of mankind. Their way was, to make *uproars*, raise a dust, mobbs and popular tumults; not disdaining to call in the assistance of the basest fellows, the very dregs and scandal of human nature, as tools fit for their purpose. These were sufficient, by their example, to teach the multitude to stop their Ears against the Apostle's doctrine and reasonings, to shut their Eyes against the miracles they wrought for confirmation of it, to open their Mouths in continual noise and exclamation, and to run, as a herd of swine, with violence upon them: and if the sufferers escap'd with their lives, those very tumults, riots and disturbances should by the Authors of them be afterwards reported to their disadvantage. The account I have given, you have in the sacred History. (b) *But the Jews which believ'd not mov'd with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gather'd a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assailed the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people: and when they found them not, they drew Jason, and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, these that have turn'd the world upside down are come hither also, whom Jason hath receiv'd; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying, that there is another King, one Jesus: and they trouble*

(a) Acts vi. 10.

(b) Acts xvii. 5-8.

at the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

NOR had the Apostles an ill Name among unbelievers only; but they suffer'd a great deal of reproach even from the professors of the christian religion, who were not all as wise and good as they shou'd have been. Their doctrine was a doctrine after godliness; a doctrine of sincerity, humility, meekness, temperance, charity, mutual forbearance in love &c. And their general practice was agreeable to their doctrine. And therefore all irregular passions, and appetites; all the corruptions of human nature, both original and contracted; all the corruption that was in the world thro' lust, and all the powers of hell and darkness were against 'em. Self-designing men, such as made an interest of blowing the coals of contention, the proud and malicious, the bitter and uncharitable, who yet named the name of Christ, were their enemies; not only the unbelieving Jews and Pagans, but judaizing Christians, that were prejudiced against the gentile Christians, (judging them incapable of salvation whilst uncircumcis'd,) and against those who were NOR prejudic'd against them, as well as they, and wou'd not decline conversation with 'em; those weak Jewish converts that wou'd still judge the strong, or more knowing; and the strong that persisted in despising the weak: of these several sorts of people the Apostles themselves, and those of their spirit and way, had numerous enemies form'd against 'em; but none more than Paul, who had the care of all the churches. We also find this heavy charge brought against Peter, (a) thou wentest in to men uncircumcis'd, and didst eat with them. An heinous crime indeed! in their account, who consider'd these gentile Christians as *beathen men and publicans*, (how much soever their hearts were purified by faith,) with whom they shou'd have no more to do, than they had been us'd to have with Samaritans. Indeed, they who then accus'd him, were so just to him, and to themselves, as impartially to consider his plea, and upon conviction to drop their charge, (b) and glorify GOD, for the discovery of the truth, which made their uncharitableness to vanish. Such ingenuity, had it every where and always obtain'd, wou'd soon have made, and have still kept, all calm and peaceable in the churches. But they were not so happy: nor was Peter himself in every instance of his practice firm to the Catholic Principle. (c)

As the primitive Christians went thro' ill reports, as well as good; so have the Reformers from Popery, and their Protestant

(a) *Act. xi. 3.*

(b) *Act. 13.*

(c) *Gal. iii. 12.*

tant successors of every denomination, how justly unexceptionable soever their conduct has been. Nay their Integrity itself, which some have call'd their Obstinate Humour, and some their Imprudence, has been a means of exposing them. I have therefore all imaginable reason to be very cautious of thinking ill of any one, merely for his having an ill Name. Hence it follows, that

PRINCIPLE III.

I must have a special Value for all those of whom I am persuaded, that they are indeed the Friends of GOD, and faithful Servants of CHRIST; by whatever NAMES they are called, and however they happen to be despised and rejected of Men, and even of their fellow Servants.

How can I love either the FATHER or the SON; if I dont love those who, as I myself think, love them, and whom, consequently, THEY love in an especial manner. Therefore,

PRINCIPLE IV.

No mistake of judgment, nor any thing else consistent with a state of Favour with GOD and CHRIST, shou'd destroy BROTHERLY KINDNESS.

WE all know but in part, and have our mistakes; tho' we can't tell what they are, till we have discover'd them; must suspect, till we have faithfully, and impartially examin'd; and when we have, and yet think our selves in the Right, and others in the Wrong; we ought, however, to be kindly affection'd towards them, who after examination also think Themselves in the right, and Us in the wrong: as they are bound to be of the same disposition of mind towards us. Thus we ought to (a) *forbear one another in love, the*
divine

(a) Eph. iv. 2.

divine approbation suppos'd. It should be a small matter with us to pardon the mistakes of our brethren, who have so Many of our own. If God don't deprive us of His favour, or blame us for what we can't help; we should not be so unmerciful to our fellow servants. The Apostle of the Gentiles, wou'd by no means encourage them and the Jewish converts, to *despise*, or *judge* one the other, upon the account of different apprehensions, which obliged them to act differently; but vehemently diswades them from it. The whole xiv. Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is to this purpose.

PRINCIPLE V.

CONFORMITY to the Example and Obedience to the Laws of CHRIST, as it is absolutely necessary, so, 'tis the best and greatest EVIDENCE any one can have, or give, of his Love to Him, and the FATHER; and consequently of his being in Favour with those GLORIOUS PERSONS.

HENCE the Apostle Paul's (a) *rejoicing* was this, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, (to please men and gain the world,) but by the grace of GOD, he had had his conversation. (b) Righteousness, peace and joy in the holy Ghost, are the things in which whoever serves Christ is acceptable to GOD, and for that reason shou'd be approv'd of men. They are good disciples of Christ who learn of their Master, and His friends and servants that do His Will, whatever they suffer for it. So hath He himself determin'd. (c) *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be lov'd of my father, and I will love him*; and the beloved Disciple hath told us, (d) *hereby we know that we know (or love) him, if we keep his commandments*; as on the other hand, (e) *he that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him*; and the

Apostle

(a) 2 Cor. i, 12.

(b) Rom. xiv, 17, 18.

(c) John xiv, 21.

(d) John ii, 3.

(e) ver. 4.

Apostle St. Paul, (d) *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Christianity is practical, and the design of all the Doctrines of it, is to bring us to God, and make us like Him; to engage us, (e) *Denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed Hope.* And it is my opinion, That whoever complies with this design, and in subserviency to it, with the Father's order, to (f) *honour the Son as Himself, hearing, believing, and sincerely obeying Him* (g) *in all things whatsoever he says, and commands,* according to the best of his Apprehensions; (his, I say, my opinion, that such a one) can't but have all the Faith that is necessary to the being of a Christian; and that no particular doctrine of Christ can reasonably be suppos'd necessary to be explicitly believ'd, which is not so plainly reveal'd, that one desirous to know His Will cannot be ignorant of it: What He himself said to the Jews with reference to his Father's Will, is easily applicable here, (h) *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself, viz. as a false teacher, and not sent from Him.*

PRINCIPLE. VI.

FAITH and the Knowledge of Truth is valuable, (chiefly, if not only) for the sake of that Duty and Obedience, that Conformity to the Nature and Will of God, that Love and Goodness, to which it should direct, and incline us; and consequently, is LESS valuable than that; as the Means is, and must be less valuable than the End, for the sake of which 'tis desired and used.

THIS is most evident from the nature of things, and the drift of the Scriptures. Faith and Knowledge, with

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(d) Rom. viii. 9. (e) Tit. ii. 11—13. (f) Joh. v. 22, 23.
(g) Act. iii. 22. (h) Joh. vii. 17.

our Humility and Charity, the Love of God and our Neighbour, will not prevent our being companions of Devils for ever.

PRINCIPLE VII.

A N Humble Disposition with Seriousness, Diligence, and Impartiality to search after, that we may know and do our Master's Will, is of much more Value and Consequence, than the bare Knowledge of any or all particular Truths, or christian Doctrines.

THE one may be without any true Christianity at all; whereas the other will necessarily bring a man to it, sufficient means suppos'd. Such a disposition the once persecuting Saul had, when he became a christian convert, and (i) *crawling and astonished, said, Lord, What wilt thou have me to do?* The Jews (k) *pricked in their Hearts*, by the sermon of Peter, and the Jaylor, when they said, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* And, *What must shall I do to be saved?* This disposition we find highly commended in the Bereans; (l) *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* And the Want of this disposition, is the only thing that ever did, or ever can make infidelity, or not believing the Gospel, criminal or dangerous. For if a man dispos'd to do the Will of God, and seriously inquiring after it, should still find it out of his Power to believe that to be a divine Revelation, which is offer'd him as such; tho' it be really so; this must happen for want of light, (since he does not shut his eyes,) or evidence to him sufficient for his conviction. And therefore, as when I say, God is Just and Good, I mean something by those words, (Just and Good;) I am fully persuaded from the notion I have of that most adorable and lovely Being, the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, that he will not hold such a

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(i) *Acts* ix. 6. (k) *Chap.* ii. 37. (l) *Chap.* xvi. 30.
 (t) *Acts* xvii. 11.

one guilty; nor enter into judgment with him on that account. But (m) the condemnation of the unbelieving Jews was, that light was come into the world, abundantly sufficient for the conviction of all within the compass of it; but they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. They were averse to the Holiness that shined in the Life of CHRIST, and the Doctrines and Laws and Designs of His Kingdom; and therefore could not find in their hearts to believe on him, and receive him as their Lord; tho' they themselves had seen his miracles, and after saw those wrought by the Apostles, to confirm their assertion, that (n) God had raised him from the dead, and given him glory, that our faith and hope might be in him. And such an Aversion to light, and purity of heart and life is, in proportion to the degree of it, still as mischievous, and as displeasing to GOD, as ever. 'Tis therefore as I said, that an humble disposition with seriousness, diligence and impartiality to search after, that we may know, and do the Will of GOD, is of much more value and consequence, than the bare knowledge of any, or all christian truths and doctrines; since he who has it will before GOD be excusable, whatever knowledge and faith such a one can be supposed to want; and without it all knowledge, and all faith can avail nothing, any more than the means can be said to avail any thing, when the end is not attained.

THE equity and importance of this Principle will more particularly, and distinctly, appear in examining, and confirming the truth of the following Assertion, viz.

THAT AN ERRONEOUS CONSCIENCE always binds; but is either good or evil, or will, or will not, excuse from Sin; as a man has, or has not exercised such an humble disposition as I have just now mention'd, with seriousness, diligence and impartiality to enquire after his Lord's will on a design to do it.

I. A MAN must always act according to his Conscience, tho' it be erroneous.

ELSE NO man wou'd be obliged to act according to his Conscience at all: since he, whose Conscience is er-

(m) John iii. 19.

(n) 1 Pet. i. 21.

reasonable, does not know it is so. I must do what I believe to be my duty; and must not do what I believe to be sinful. To act against the convictions of one's own mind, or do what I think is displeasing to God, is indeed to displease Him. For any one, therefore, to act INNOCENTLY against his Conscience, must be for ever impossible, as it is a contradiction in terms.

1. This erroneous Conscience is either good, or evil; or will, or will not excuse from Sin, as a man has, or has not exercised such an humble disposition, as I have just now mentioned.

He that acts against his Conscience, always sins, whether his conscience be erroneous, or not; as the Scripture Hetericks who are (i) *condemned of themselves*. But a man may act according to his Conscience, and yet be guilty before God. His conscience may itself be evil, when he (p) *calls evil good, and good evil; puts darkness for light, and light for darkness*. A war is denounced against those that do this: which doubtless would not have been, if it were owing to pure and unavoidable mistake. Therefore this misguided and erroneous Conscience must be either good or evil, and excuse or not excuse, as a man has, or has not sincerely and faithfully endeavoured to inform it well, by diligent and impartial Enquiry into the nature of things, and the Mind and Will of God, in order to the regulation of his practice.

ON the one hand,

1. If the exercise of such an humble and inquisitive disposition has been wanting; tho' he should, as it were, stumble upon the Truth, or happen to be in the right, he is never the more acceptable to God for it.

He that believes the Truth of the christian religion, and authority of the Scriptures, merely because born and brought up in a christian and protestant Country, and of parents of that profession; would, for the same reason, have been a Jew, Turk, or Pagan, if his lot had been in the same manner cast among such respectively: and his zeal to hold fast what is indeed Truth, as he has received it, (of which however he has not diligently and impartially examined the evidence, and what

(i) *Th. iii. 10, 11.*

(p) *Isaiah vi. 20.*

what he had opportunity to hear against it, as well as for it, this zeal, I say, in Him, is not, a true and regular zeal for Truth; but blind zeal for an opinion, which he has by chance taken up; such as the baser sort of people of all religions are as likely as any to be inspir'd with, and to glory in; they having nothing of true wisdom and goodness to recommend them.

2. AND if a man's Conscience be erroneous for want of this humble serious and impartial endeavour to know the Truth; if he hath shut one, if not both of his Eyes and Ears; he is answerable for all the mischievous Consequences of his error: as a drunken man, who not knowing what he does, commits a murder, is answerable for that effect of his intemperance.

IF such a one think he must *do evil that good may come*, and lye, revile, backbite, and slander, spoil his neighbours goods, or take away his liberty, or his life for the sake of the Truth, which he is confident he has in his possession; if this be the principle he has imbibed, and in which he has been educated, and in laziness, or pretended reverence for his wise forefathers, he will not suspect, or examine it, but with as much stiffness as ignorance, maintain it; the consequence is, that he must needs be injurious to himself; or to himself, and others too. By this means he wrongs his own soul, by laying himself under a necessity of sinning. He sins, if he does Not act according to this erroneous Conscience; and in these circumstances he grievously sins, if he does. They who, thro' such wilful and affected ignorance, (g) *think they do God service* in killing his servants, will not be justified in the great day; (r) *seeing it is a righteous thing with him to avenge their sufferings and blood, and recompence tribulation to them that have troubled them.* I know not what, but no doubt all equitable allowances will be made for the almost invincible prejudices, which certain junctures of circumstances may have laid some under, but woe to those who *close their eyes at mid-day* against the light shining round them. Saul when a persecutor, (s) *verily thought with himself, that he ought to do as he did:* and he tells us, (t) *he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief.* If he had

(g) *John xvi. 2.* (r) *2 Thess. i. 6.* (s) *Acts xxvi. 9.*
 (t) *1 Tim. i. 13.*

had herein acted AGAINST his conscience, he had contracted a double guilt, and been much more inexcusable than he was. And the vast prejudices of his education were a further abatement of his guilt. We find a caution (u) against regarding a sign, or a wonder, tho' it came to pass, if offered as a confirmation of a doctrine to go after other Gods. And the Jewish doctors might easily in their zeal for the law of Moses, which was also the law of GOD confirmed already by miracles, stretch this in favour of that law against any that, as a prophet, should pretend to an authority for the laying aside that veil: and 'tis not improbable that he himself had some such principle revitted in his mind, as might make him think, that he must not, at his utmost peril, hear what the christians had to say on behalf of their Master; or regard what they had done, and were still ready to do, to prove His resurrection. Yet, whatever we may suppose of this nature to lessen his fault, he esteemed himself (x) the chief of sinners, and (y) not meet to be called an apostle, as having been (z) a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. He was injurious to himself, as well as to others. How far was he from the perfection and happiness of his nature! How unlike to the GOD of peace and love, and unfit for the blissful regions, when acting the part of Satan he (a) shut up many of the Saints in prison, and gave his voice for their death, punished them oft in every Synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them even unto strange cities. How vastly was the case altered for the better! when he had CHANGED HIS PRINCIPLES, as well of Faith, as Practice; and went up and down the world, preaching and suffering for that (b) which once he destroyed. How much better did the persecuted Servant of JESUS enjoy himself and his GOD, than the persecuting Pharisee! The injured labourer in doing good, than the injurious! He was not, surely, so happy a man, when (c) breathing out threatenings and slaughter, he was on the road to Damascus, with full powers to bring as many as he could find of that way, which was then called heresy, without distinction

(u) Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. (x) 1 Tim. i. 15. (y) 1 Cor. xv. 9.
 (z) 1 Tim. i. 13. (a) Acts xxvi. 10, 11. (b) Gal. i. 23.
 (c) Acts ix. 1, 2.

function of Iex, bound unto to Jerusalem, and compel them to blaspheme: as when he was himself a close prisoner, singing (d) *midnight praises to God*. In the first case, indeed, he acted according to his Conscience: but then, his (e) *mind and conscience itself was defil'd*. (f) *The light of the body is the eye: and if that light be darkness; how great is that darkness!* So it was with that zealot: and so it is with others, who instead of opening to conviction, wilfully close their eyes. So dangerous a thing is it to want an humble and teachable disposition, a readiness, with freedom and diligence, to enquire, *What is Truth?* and the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God; and what is contrary to it! In short,

He that will not fairly examine the matter on both sides, is no doubt more likely to miss the Truth, than one that does. The wise man, in his own conceit, as the *Sluggard* may easily be, is likely to continue (g) *wiser than seven men that can render a reason*: since he will not so far suspect himself, as to hear any thing against his first thoughts. And the God, who (h) *resisteth the proud*, may justly forsake the understanding of such a one, and give him up to delusion.

BUT if he should happen in the way of negligence and prejudice, to obtain more of Truth than his neighbours; (who after faithful enquiries may possibly be in the wrong;) that way is nevertheless displeasing to his Maker; and he will never be able to give a good account of it.

AND if for want of an impartial examination, he falls into, or holds fast an error; 'tis the proper and natural fruit of his own way; and he must answer for what ever may be the mischievous consequence of it, with respect to himself, or others.

BUT now, on the other hand,

I. THE humble and inquisitive person, he that diligently and impartially seeks, is most likely to find the Truth. (i) *A wise man will hear, and will increase learning.*

He that in an Assize-hall hears Causes but on one side, and so forms his judgment, may sometimes happen to be in the right; tho' even then by such a method he is much more in the wrong. But he that hears thole causes, and weighs

(d) *Act. xvi. 25.* (e) *Tit. i. 15.* (f) *Matth. vi. 22, 23.*
 (g) *Prov. xxvi. 16.* (h) *1 Pet. v. 5.* (i) *Prov. i. 5.*

weighs what is said on both sides, takes the best and most likely method he can, to form a true judgment about them. And if he err, he does not err as a fool, or as an unrighteous person.

2. As he is most likely to find Truth, that diligently and impartially enquires after it; so when he does find it in that way of his duty, he will have other manner of satisfaction in it, than one that finds it by chance.

3. AND he must better understand the grounds of it, and so is in a rational manner confirm'd in it.

4. WHENEVER the humble and diligent Enquirer after Truth misses it, and takes up with an error, that error in Him is innocent; because, morally speaking, unavoidable.

A LATE Archdeacon of *Wells*, once in a book of controversy, more than insinuated, that it was an abominable supposition, That God * would judge that Conscience innocent, which is in certain cases erroneous, after **UTMOST AND IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION**: and yet in a private letter, I had from him soon after he publish'd it, he makes this principle of faith, (k) "God is, and is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him, the grand principle and basis of natural religion." In this I agree with him: but am so far from what appears to have been his other opinion, that I can't doubt, but God will accept of much less than the **UTMOST**, that strictly speaking, is possible; and will make gracious allowances for human frailty in the exercise of the understanding, as well as of the will and affections, where He sees integrity, and the prevalence of an humble and teachable disposition. And to suppose, that conscience may

* *Dial. between Demas and Hiereche*, p. 79, 80. "A profess'd *Atheism* so confin'd, is free, by your principles, from the rods or ax of the magistrate; and well he may, if God shall judge that Conscience innocent, in which he has finally settled upon his utmost and impartial examination, which, it seems, justifies all men before God; not only in speculations and usages interwoven by men into their religions; but even in the grossest principles of universal and absolute irreligion. Such, forsooth, are the *Rights of the Christian Church*, to share all the benefits of God and man with the rankest *Atheists*. (k) *Ibid.* xi. 6.

may settle in *Atheism* or in *Deism* after utmost and impartial examination, is in effect to suppose, there may be cases in which *Atheists* and *Deists* will not be left inexcusable; since it must be a good excuse, That they could not avoid their infidelity, in the most diligent use of the only proper means for it. For my part, I can't at once believe, that *GOD* is a rewarder of *them that diligently seek him*, and that he will damn any of our *Deists* or *Atheists* either; if I also suppose, that tho' they do diligently seek him, they can't be otherwise. I am persuaded, that in fact there are mistakes of great importance in their nature, as tending to irreligion, and yet innocent and harmless in well-dispos'd minds, which may be owing to those better Principles, which such can't but hold fast, and be govern'd by, not seeing the inconsistency, and, to borrow an expression of that great Man Mr. *Howe*, to * "the privilege vouchsaf'd them, that "they may possibly drink some deadly thing, which shall "not hurt them." Which he applies to a Patron of that monstrous doctrine of physical predetermination, or *GOD's* irresistible determining all men to bad actions, as well as good. (l) *He that resisteth the proud, giveth grace to the humble, tho' mistaken man.* (m) *The integrity of the upright shall guide, and preserve them.* He that from an erroneous Conscience acts what is amiss in its own nature, will have a great deal of satisfaction, if he has ground for an Appeal to *GOD*, That the error was not for want of humble and diligent enquiries, and that he was as sincere in those enquiries, after the Way of Truth and Duty, as the Traveller uses to be, when he enquires after the Way to the place whither he is bound; who yet after all, may miss it, by failure of memory, or mistaking the directions that were given him. Wherever there is a pure Heart, there is a good Conscience; tho' in many instances it may be mistaken. To conclude this,

"IN order to our acceptance with *GOD*, and usefulness to ourselves and others, we ought to be modest and humble; sincere and unbiass'd, faithful and diligent, in our searches after sacred Truth; and then, tho' we must not expect to have nothing but Truth in this state of imperfection, our errors will
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* Postscript to *Howe's* of *Prescience*. p. 15. (l) 2 *Pat.* v. 5.

(p) *Matth.* xxv. 21. *Prov.* xi. 3.

"neither be criminal, nor mischievous; if other parts of our management agree with this *." It must be so, because GOD, who is no hard Master, can require no more of a man than he is able to do: and no man is able to do more than is here suppos'd; human infirmities still allow'd for.

THE Sum of all is,

1. A man may have Truth, and yet be as bad as if he had it not.

2. A man may miss it, and yet be as safe as if he had it.

3. NONE but the humble and diligent Enquirer can be accepted of GOD, and is, by virtue of his being so, entitled to as much Truth as is necessary, at least for Him.

PRINCIPLE VIII.

THO' I am in the general sense to love all men; I must in a particular manner distinguish in my own Mind, and in my Carriage too, those call'd Christians, who live up to their profession, from those who are a Scandal to it.

I. IN my own Mind.

WHENEVER, and where-ever I find any one, who shews me by good fruits in his conversation, that he has the Spirit of CHRIST, and lives to Him, I must think myself immediately bound to love him, as one that loves that Blessed Lord of ours in sincerity; whether he agrees with me, or differs from me in opinion, as to points controverted amongst those of the same character; and consequently, the more he has of improv'd knowledge, and the christian spirit and life, the more Love I think due to him from me. On the other hand, Whenever I see one that is call'd a christian brother, acting contrary to the design of the death of CHRIST; addicted either to brutish or sensual vices, or to diabolical ones; such as pride, lying, and malice; I conclude him to be indeed no friend of CHRIST; but His enemy,

enemy, and the servant of the Devil. I know him as I know a tree by its fruits, and must, in proportion to the apprehended measure of his wickedness, be displeased with him.

II. IN my Carriage, as the matter shall require.

I MUST upon all proper occasions testify my Love to those whom I think the faithful Servants of CHRIST, as having their *† conversation as becometh the gospel*. I must not be ashamed, or afraid to own any one of them, when providentially called to it; tho' I may have temptation to be so; as *Peter, Barnabas*, and others had to withdraw, and separate themselves from the *Gentiles*, in the presence of certain *Jewish* converts, uncharitably zealous against them; for which highly culpable Piece of (n) *dissimulation*, the Apostle Paul rebuked that Apostle mentioned openly, and *before them all*; and has left it recorded to all posterity. I could not give a good account of such a conduct at His Bar whom I call my LORD. I fear he would interpret the being *ashamed* of His servants seriously endeavouring to please him according to the light they have, tho' not without their mistakes, infirmities, and imperfections, a being *ashamed* of Himself, and a *despising* them, for a *despising* Him, and (o) His *Words*, by which He has enjoined me on the greatest encouragement, and at my peril too if I neglect it, to exercise a very tender and affectionate regard even to the (p) *least* of them whom he calls His *brethren*, especially when in distress. Should I withdraw and separate myself from them, or discover a shyness of conversing with them, because under a popular odium for mistakes of judgment, real or supposed, to them however humanly speaking unavoidable; I should think myself guilty of a kind or degree of persecution, and that the one Master in Heaven would resent it as an injury done to Himself, in some proportion as in those greater instances, upon the occasion of which he once expostulated with a persecutor in these terms, (q) *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Such a carriage towards them would be by my example to justify, and encourage others in the contempt they cast upon them, a giv-

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† Phil i. 27. (n) Gal. ii. 11, 14, &c. (q) Mark viii. 38.
(m) Psal. xxv. 40, 45. (q) Acts ix. 4.

ing my voice for their banishment from christian, if not human society, and what I should my self think hard treatment from one of a different perswasion. Indeed, if I did this ignorantly, I might obtain mercy, and ready forgiveness of the mistake: but I must take heed of doing it wilfully, and when I think I know, at least by credible report, the Man, the Disciple of CHRIST, and his Conversation: for then I know who will espouse his cause, and (r) *be ashamed of Me before Men and Angels*; even He that said, and will say, (s) *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison and ye visited me not*; and that he who (t) *gives but a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward*. And if I must have a very tender regard to all whom I think real disciples and servants of CHRIST, considered as such; then the more disinterested, self-denying, and faithful any are in their care to please him, to the best of their knowledge, so much the greater proportion of respect I owe them. (u) *Mark them that walk as ye have us for an example*. And if the person whom I receive in the name of a disciple, should prove a deceiver; He that knows the purity of my intention, and the Integrity of my heart, will not suffer me to lose my reward for the mistake I was under, any more than for this, that I have nothing better than a cup of cold water to refresh a disciple with.

AND I am no less obliged upon proper occasions to disown, and protest against one that professes to be a servant of CHRIST, but acts as the (x) *enemy of his cross*, is (y) *called a brother, but walks disorderly*; gives a lye to his profession, being a *fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a raiser, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, and goes on in his trespasses, hardened and unmoved at the frequent reproofs which have been given him. With such a one I am not so much as to eat*. As providentially called to it, I must, so far as I can, discourage other men's sins, that I may not be partaker of them.

AND I must observe both parts of this Rule impartially; value, and be ready upon all occasions to testify

(r) *Mark* viii. 38. (s) *Matth.* xxv. 42, 43. (t) *Matth.* x. 42. (u) *Phil.* iii. 17. (x) *1st* Cor. v. 11. (y) *1st* Cor.

fy my value for a true disciple and follower of CHRIST; whether private christian, or minister, according to the measure of the spirit of CHRIST he discovers; tho' his sentiments should be ever so different from mine; and as much abhor and disclaim every *worker of iniquity*; tho' he not only professes christianity, but has embraced such a set of notions in religion as mine are, and such a way of worship; yea, tho' he were my own brother. A method, than which nothing cou'd be more suitable to our Profession, which we call HOLY, or would make more for its credit and honour; were it but generally observed.

PRINCIPLE IX.

IN the affair of Religion I must take nothing upon Trust from any, which I can myself examine; whether they are single persons, or great bodies of men; few, or many; clergy of whatever sort, or laity; men of wisdom, honour and conscience, or a sottish and unthinking mobb; cotemporaries, or parents and ancestors; men of present, or of past ages.

THEY are all fallible. None of them are my Masters. Councils and Fathers, Convocations and Assemblies have erred, and erred grievously too; have contradicted one another, and themselves, and that sometimes in the same breath. Truth has commonly been born down, in this dark and corrupted world, by a vast Majority of Votes. When *Athanasius* was against the world, and the world against *Athanasius*; that was no argument at all, that the *Arian* world was in the right, and he in the wrong. Nor was *Luther* in the wrong, because very few, comparatively, of any rank or order, were of his mind. Nor *Calvin*, because few even among Protestants were of his, in some points; since the far greater part of them were, and are *Lutherans*. CHRIST is my Master, and as His disciple I must learn of Him. I must not derive my faith, any more than my works, from the treasury of the church of
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England, or Scotland; Rome, or Geneva; nor of any particular member of any church, how wise and good soever. No! I must use my own reason in matters of my own Faith, and my own Conscience, and search (z) after the knowledge of truth and duty, as for silver. Nor can I answer it to Him, who has given me an understanding faculty, and the means of improving it, if as a *wicked, and slothful servant*, I only take pains to bury the *talent*, or hide His money in the earth (a). From an awful sense of Eternal Judgment, I must use my own reason, and judge and determine for my self even about Revelation; as to the evidence upon which any thing is offered to me as revelation; and next, as to the sense of that Revelation, what it is.

AND as upon serious enquiry, I am persuaded, that the Holy Scripture, containing what is offered as the christian revelation, is indeed the word of God, and a sufficient, and a compleat Rule of faith, and manners; so taking it for such a Rule, 'tis my most valuable right and liberty to endeavour to understand it the best I can, and to judge, and determine the sense of it for my self. And I am bound to use it. Nor is my liberty and obligation herein singular: but every one of my neighbours, not only the wise and learned, ministers and students in divinity, but the weak, the illiterate, and the meanest of mechanicks, have an equal claim to this liberty of private judgment, or judging and determining for themselves, and are bound to use it, according to the measure of those capacities and opportunities, which divine Providence has respectively allotted them.

PRINCIPLE X.

I MUST not pretend to judge for myself, and surely therefore not for others, in matters of Controversy, of which I am not capable of examining, or however have not yet examined the Evidence; much less may I pretend to judge of, believe, or teach what I don't so much as understand: whence
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(z) Prov. ii. 2,—4.

(a) Matth. xxv. 25, 26.

it immediately follows, That I must not receive from others, or use myself, words which are to me but empty sounds; as having no Ideas at all affix'd to them, or else contradictory Ideas; words of which I have or know no meaning, or no consistent meaning.

I MUST act against all Rules of modesty and humility; and be guilty of intollerable arrogance and presumption, if I thus (b) *exercise myself in things*, which I must confess, I think, are *too high for me*. I may, indeed, do well strictly to examine, whether they are so, or not; and make trial, by all the proper helps I can have, whether I can understand them; especially, when represented to me as matters of importance. But, before I presume to judge for myself, and especially before I judge for others by a liberal distribution of censures, or even so far as but to offer them instruction, I must first enquire, and in some measure understand, what those matters are, or what is the state of the Controversy about them; *viz.* What is granted on both sides, and what is deny'd on one, and so, what is the Question in debate: unless I would deserve the apostolical Censure of those, who (c) *turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*. An example of which I had given me in the following relation by the late Reverend, valuable, and Catholick Man, Mr. Chandler of the Bath, not long before his death, the truth of which he well knew, concerning one who was Minister of a congregation, some of whom had in the vehemence of their zeal for something or other, which they call'd *Independent* principles, given him a great deal of trouble. Quite weary of it, he at length propos'd the having an Assembly of Ministers, before whom the matter might be debated. After they had agreed to it, one of them wisely consider'd, that 'twas expedient for them, before

(b) *Psal.* cxxxi. 1.(c) *1 Tim.* i. 6, 7.

Before the time came, to procure from their brethren at London, an account of what *Independent* principles were; that they might not be confounded, if so puzzling a question should be put to them. And I am sensible, what wise men must think of me, if they see me raging and confident about I know not what, fighting valiantly in the dark, (d) *proud and knowing nothing*, but eagerly engaging in disputes about empty sounds, called by the Apostle *strifes of words*, whereof cometh envy, &c. Words are empty sounds to me, when I have no ideas, thoughts or notions join'd with them; or such as clash, and destroy one another. As if I should say, two and two make five; a creature made by himself; a good man, all whose thoughts are only evil continually; a just God, who will not do right, or will lay upon man more than is right; the divine Being, considered in a metaphysical sense, or as distinguished from the divine Attributes, is absolutely every where, and yet wholly contain'd, or comprehended in every narrow space, or in the Heaven of Heavens. These words are empty sounds to me, when I don't know the meaning of them: and when I do, they appear to be no less empty, and insignificant; because the meaning is not consistent. And to believe a proposition made of such inconsistent terms, is to believe that a thing is, and is not, in the same respect. * "A manifest contradiction is a manifest falsehood." Nor must, nor, indeed, can I believe what I can't understand to be so much as possible. Whatever God has reveal'd unto me, I believe: but nothing is reveal'd unto me, till I can understand what it is. I must not receive from any, unexplain'd terms, or believe an assertion made up of terms explain'd to an inconsistency. Hence I utterly reject, as all Protestants do, the popish explication of those words of our Saviour, (e) *This is my Body*; because I am sure he could not mean to declare that for Truth, which sense and reason declare to be absurd, and absolutely impossible. The bread in his hand could not be that hand itself; much less his whole body, in a proper, or any other than a figurative sense. I know His words could not be true in the sense, (if non-sense may be called sense,) which these men give. And therefore, my faith in him obliges me to a perswasion, that

(d) 1 Tim. vi. 4.

* Vid. my Ordination Sermon p. 32.

(e) Matth. xxvi. 26.

that He never meant so, as to mean nothing; or worse; and consequently not to believe what they tell me. I can't believe in Him, and them too; any more than I can serve God and Mammon. And if I could not find a possible, not to say a probable, sense of those words; deference to my Lord's Wisdom and Veracity, who, I believe, used them, would then oblige me to conclude, I did not understand 'em; that being much more honourable, than to ascribe vain words, or a known and absolute falshood to Him. A contradiction is not sense; and whatever is, I am sure that can't be the true sense of Scripture, which is no sense at all.

As I must not receive, so neither must I use Words without a consistent Meaning. I must not pretend to judge of, or say, I believe any thing, without knowing what that thing is; since I esteem it impossible for me so to believe it. A celebrated Author, in a late controversy, has these words, * "Such as our ideas are, such must our faith be; and we can't believe farther than we can conceive; for believing is conceiving; confusedly, if ideas are confused; generally, if general; distinctly and adequately, if distinct and adequate". And, † "We assent as far as our ideas reach; for we can do no more: we believe in part what is reveal'd in part; our faith keeping pace with our ideas, and ending where they end". I must never offer words which to myself are insignificant, as means of instruction to others.

Now is it sufficient, tho' it be necessary, in order to my forming a Judgment, even for myself, about a matter of controversy, that I know the meaning of the words that are used in it, and the true state of the question; but it is also necessary, that I should know, in some measure, the Arguments offer'd on both sides. He that has an ear for the plaintiff, but none for the defendant, can be no competent judge of the Cause. The judgment he passes, tho' he should happen to determine right, must in Him be rash, partial and unjust. And I should be very cautious in the point of trusting those of one side in their accounts of the other, without hearing what those of the other do themselves

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* Dr. Waterland's Defence of his Queries, pag. 315.

† Pag. 316.

offer; since nothing is more common, than for men in the heat of dispute, thro' mistake, or willingly, to misrepresent both the opinions, and arguments of those whom they count, and call, and treat as adversaries, because nor of their mind. In those matters wherein I think myself concern'd to judge, I should impartially hear what people have to say for themselves, rather than what others have to say for 'em, or rather against 'em. And I should violently suspect their Cause, and that they themselves suspected it, who discovered an unwillingness that I should be thus impartial in my enquiries. I am sure, it looks like an ill Cause, that shuns the light; and 'tis a good one, that needs nothing else to defend it.

PRINCIPLE XI.

DISPUTES about religion are very useful, or very hurtful, as they are well, or ill design'd, and managed.

I. THESE Disputes are very useful, when they are well design'd and managed.

THAT Disputes may be thus useful, they must be design'd to improve our Understandings, and our Tempers; and to influence our practice of christian duties; to promote knowledge, which may lead and engage us to duty, and the exercise of true goodness, becoming thoughts of, and a becoming deportment of ourselves towards God and man, sincerity, meekness, humility, love, &c. in short, *(f)* the wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

AND the Management must be according to the Design. Well meant Disputes may, in some respect or other, be so ill managed, as to be useless, if not hurtful.

I. IN the first place, they must be the exercise of the Understanding. Else that faculty will not be improv'd by them. When people dont know *(g)* what they say, nor whereof they affirm, only *(h)* pour out their foolishness, and im-

(f) Jam. iii. 17. *(g)* 1 Tim. i. 7. *(h)* Prov. xv. 2.

impervinence, in a multitude of words; they must needs be (i) *vain talkers*, as vain as *unruly*, whose mouths must be stopped, when their neighbours become wise enough to despise them. The Words used in a controversy must have a distinct Meaning, and be proper to convey it to others, and therefore be (k) *easy to be understood*: else they will be *spoken into the air*, and as *Words in an unknown tongue*, ten thousand of which Children in understanding may hear, and speak, and be as far from Men as ever. The Apostle therefore had rather speak *five words with his understanding*, that he might teach others. Nor must our Words be used as a *trumpet*, when it gives an *uncertain sound*. They must have a distinct, and fix'd meaning in the whole management of a controversy. For if we use them sometimes in one sense, and sometimes in a different; we shall not understand one another, or know when we agree, and when we differ in our apprehensions; especially, if we forget, or neglect to explain ourselves at every turn. And if we do; after all, that may not be sufficient to prevent confusion: for those explications, clashing one with another, may soon be forgotten.

It is expedient to take, and use words in the sense best known, and most usual in other cases; unless manifest reason, from the nature and circumstances of things, oblige us to the contrary.

WHEN we do use any term or phrase in an uncommon, or singular sense, we should be exceeding careful to declare that sense in the plainest, clearest manner; together with the evidence, that such an use of it is agreeable to the Scripture Doctrine, or account of things; if the Dispute be on a subject of Revelation. Such a method as this being observ'd, it must presently appear, Whether the terms of a proposition, the Truth of which we are to assist one another in our enquiries after, have, or have not inconsistent ideas affix'd to them, and so the Mark of Falshood and Impossibility, which none can be obliged to take for Truth. Whenever this appears to be the case, with Me the controversy is ended at the very beginning of it, and so I save my time from "superfluous Studies," and a great many needless and tedious Disputes, for better purposes:

(i) Tit. i. 10, 11. (k) 1 Cor. xiv. 9, 7—11, 19.

v. g. Should a popish Priest offer to engage me in a dispute with him about Transubstantiation; I wou'd desire him to tell me, what he means by that Word; or to explain his opinion in words to me intelligible. If he wou'd not do that; I wou'd have no more to say to him, as having little mind to contend about insignificant words. If he tell me, his opinion is, That the bread CHRIST held in his hand, was itself that hand, or his whole body; and that this whole body is now in *France*, and yet the same moment at *Rome*, and a thousand other distant places; tho' there is no where any other appearance than of bread; when he has said this, he has said enough for Me. If I know what he means; I presently know, tis impossible it should be true: since a thing can't be, and not be at the same time. I need not wait for his proof; because I am sure before-hand it can't be good: unless Falshood and Truth are the same. Nor is it worth my while, with regard to this controversy, so much as to open my Bible, and examine the context, where those words, *This is my Body*, are found. I might do it to satisfy myself, what may be the sense of 'em; if I had not before inquir'd into it: but I should have no occasion to do it for my own satisfaction, that they could not be true in the popish sense. Indeed, if I knew any one in danger of thinking, that those words must be so understood, and thence drawing an inference dishonourable to Him that spake 'em; I should then think it highly expedient to explain to him, from the nature of the thing, and the context, what I took to be the sense, and the reason of it; or else to shew him that there was no necessity to conclude, that CHRIST JESUS himself did indeed mean, as the Priests interpret.

DID such a method obtain, so far as to me it appears reasonable that it should; Disputes might, I conceive, be brought into a much narrower compass, and perhaps, nine parts in ten of the books of controversy be spared. Nay, had it been observ'd; some of the best performances of that kind, and to which the christian World owes a great deal of the light it now has into the Scriptures, even these might, it may be, have been less necessary. But Stationers, Printers, and Booksellers need not be apprehensive of damage by such hints of a method for contracting Disputes, and reducing the number of 'em; since

since they are not likely to be taken; and if they were, those Gentlemen, it might be hoped, would not have less business; tho' what they had, might be more for the publick advantage.

2. As Disputes, to make them useful, must be exercises of the Understanding; so, they must be of an hearty desire, and consequently, they must be serious and hearty endeavours, after an increase of Knowledge.

3. They must also be managed with a constant View at, and a reference of all the Discoveries we have, or can make, to Practice: since that alone can render knowledge useful to us. *The Wisdom from above is pure.* There must be a readiness to embrace whatever appears to us as *sound doctrine*, that is to say, *doctrine after godliness*, design'd and calculated to promote it.

4. THAT Disputes may be useful, they must be exercises of Love and Charity, true love to God, myself, and my neighbour; a concern to know, please, and enjoy Him, as far as I can; and so to seek the perfection and happiness of my own nature, and in like manner theirs, with whom I have to do. Edification of myself and others, must be really aim'd at. Now it is *(1)* *charity which edifies*. This is the principle which excites and directs our endeavours; for it makes us desire and seek one another's welfare. I love my neighbour as myself; and therefore I seek his good, as well as my own; and for that reason, am willing, so far as I can, to convey useful knowledge to him, as well as to receive it from him. The advancement of Charity, is also the End we should propose to ourselves in our Disputes. *(m)* *The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* This charity, or christian love, is also the End of all christian faith and knowledge; since without that, this can profit us nothing: and therefore it should be our End in all our Disputes. We must design, and suitably exert ourselves upon that design, to *edify one another in love*; that love which is the fulfilling of the Law and Gospel: and therefore care must be taken, that there be nothing in the management to clash with this design, and that every thing contribute to it. Moreover,

5. That

(1) 1 Cor. viii. 1.

(m) 1 Tim. i. 5.

5. The Management of Disputes, that they may be useful, must be cool and calm. This would be as much for the advancement of Truth, as Righteousness. Mutual understanding and assistance would thus be consulted.

6. It should also be modest and decent; not confident and insulting; joyn'd with a suspicion of ourselves, as the case may admit, and require it; a supposition, that it is possible for us to be mistaken as well as others, tho' we don't see the mistake. Indeed I am not bound to entertain a doubt of what appears to me self-evident. I must offer what I think instructive, with meekness. Again,

7. The Management must be considerate and attentive. I must consider well what I have to say myself, and not say any thing that is not clear in my own mind; and I must patiently, without unnecessary interruption, and carefully attend to what another says to Me, if I do but think it worth while to have conversation with him on a subject of Dispute. And,

8. It must be sincere, and free. Sincere, without guile, and imposing, or misrepresentations of opinions or arguments, shuffling with words, or saying one thing, when we mean another. It ought to be free. There should be so much confidence in each other, as to ingenuous and fair treatment, as may dispose for a free communication of arguments, difficulties, and objections on either side, that so the matter may be thoroughly examin'd, and all possible assistances given, and taken in the enquiry after Truth. I could not securely dispute with any one at *Rome*, Whether the Pope was Antichrist; without his profession, and my confidence in his sincerity, that he would make no ill use of it; and therefore wanting that foundation for necessary freedom, I might think it prudent to decline it. And then,

9. It must be impartial and unbiass'd. We should be, at least, as (n) *swift to hear*, as to speak; always dispos'd to lie open to Light, and yielding to Conviction; desirous of Truth where-ever it is, rather than fond of an opinion, which we call so before we have examin'd it; desirous to find Truth, rather than to make a show of it; willing both to understand, and to be understood; putting the best construction we can on words,

words, instead of wresting them; doing as we would be done by.

10. THERE should be mutual charity and forbearance in the close of a Dispute, as well as in the beginning, and progress of it; where there is nothing worse to need it, than different apprehensions.

FINALLY, There should be no violation of Truth, Justice, Charity, or Prudence in reports and representations afterwards of what has pass'd.

WHEN thus design'd and managed, Disputes are, and may be exceeding useful.

ON the other hand,

THOSE Disputes may be, and are useless, and mischievous, when the Design or Management, one or both, is ill.

1. WHEN they are not well design'd, as above; to promote knowledge, love, and practice; but for ostentation and vanity; to nourish pride and self-conceit; to gain an advantage to ridicule, or expose those we think weak, or erroneous, to the people, who we are willing shou'd know what an esteem they shou'd have for Us; to advance the credit of one party, and sink that of another; to get a Name, and be talk'd of as being zealous for Truth, (as any opinion, whether true or false, may be called,) and capable of defending it against the errors of the times. Thus, when any one is furnish'd with a good stock of assurance, to supply the Want of the understanding of a Man, and can but be inspir'd (as he may easily be by Satan's help) with an equal measure of party zeal, and hellish fury; THAT shall be enough to atone for his brutish Vices, and gratify his Ambition to be taken notice of in the world, amongst those who have capacity and disposition to be this way wrought upon. The song of the drunkards will be acceptable, if the temple of the Lord, or deal not with the Samaritans, be the burthen of it.

INTEREST as well as Reputation, and by means of it, may be sought after. The design of those men, whom at the beginning of christianity the Apostle wou'd have mark'd and avoided as causing (o) divisions, was not, how much so ever the Name of JESUS might be in their mouths, to serve Him; but their own bellies. This sort of men taught things they ought not for filthy lucre's sake. Nor did they care what it was, so it wou'd serve their end. They, who by all the ways and means they

they are capable of, unrighteous ones not excepted, seek to advance the interest and reputation of one party in sinking that of another, don't use to forget themselves, or their own, by which indeed they are most influenced.

When the Design of engaging in Disputes is no better than this, or at best than that of indulging a busy, impertinent and talkative, or else a wrangling humour: What can be expected? but that the Management will be answerable to it, and that such Disputes, whatever Subject they are upon, should be useless, and exceeding mischievous. I say then,

2. THE Management is ill, and must needs be so, when Disputes are exercises of *earthly, sensual, and devilish Wisdom*; when they are so managed, as to be really *(p)* *strifes about Words*, empty and insignificant sounds; when they are senseless and impertinent; the Question and Argument on either side not known, understood, or consider'd. What can be expected from the management? when the design is not edification, either in Knowledge or Love, but to raise a Dust and Clamour, and to destroy, instead of promoting Brotherly-kindness; and the parties are not willing to understand, or be understood? What can be expected from a management that is neither innocent, nor peaceable, much less charitable? but the Disputes are exercises of *Man's Wrath*, which is no more a friend to Truth, than it is to the *Righteousness of God*; when it is bitter, envious and malicious, rude and indecent, confident and assuming, hasty and listless, one or both parties being swift to speak, and slow to hear; when 'tis hypocritical, captious and ensnaring, with Prejudice and Partiality; when they are begun, carry'd on, and concluded with a spirit quite contrary to that of CHRIST, and follow'd with a great deal of Clamour and Evil-speaking, unkind and injurious Misrepresentations and Reflections afterwards.

But Disputes thus design'd and managed, precious Time (which when lost, can't be redeemed by Tears of Blood) is not only wasted, but wretchedly abused; and instead of serving the best, such Disputes do indeed serve the vilest and most unchristian Purposes. So that they are not only useless, but mischievous, even beyond expression. And therefore, *Timothy* is warn'd to shun such Disputes, and the Managers of them. *(q)* *If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

(p) 1 Tim. vi. 4. *(q)* 1 Tim. vi. 3.

Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions; and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil-surmisings, perverse disputings, of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of truth, (tho' no doubt they pretended to it, and glory'd in the pretension,) supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. They were Disputers of this World, and not of the Kingdom not belonging to it. And the Exhortations elsewhere may well be understood as Dissuasives from 'em, (t) And grieve not the holy Spirit of God. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore, followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. By means of such ill-natur'd Disputes, (t) the tongue, that unruly member, scatters its deadly poison, and sett on fire the course of nature, being itself set on fire of hell. How much soever any glory in pretences to the Truth of the Gospel, they do but lye against it, if they have bitter enoyings, and strife in their hearts. That wisdom descendeth not from above. But where it is, there is confusion, and every evil work: which excludes the fruit of righteousness, which is sown in peace, of them that make peace. And therefore so little notice is taken of that most excellent and divine Counsel by those, who would be thought wise and knowing, (u) Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you, let him shew out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom.

THIS Rule about Disputes, as well or ill design'd, or managed, being compar'd with the ordinary practice and state of things; I conceive a forwardness to engage in a Discourse of Controversy, to be highly inexpedient, without occasion given to make it necessary, or a prospect, or hopes in some degree, that more good than hurt may be done by it. But I must not, to avoid Disputes, go one step out of the Way of that Duty which I owe to God, and my neighbour. And therefore,

PRINCIPLE. XII.

I MUST take all fit occasions, and opportunities

(t) Eph. iv. 30—32. Chap. v. 1, 2. (u) Jam. iii. 5, 6, 8, 14—18. (x) Ver. 13.

portunities given me, in the best manner I can, to discountenance an unchristian temper, and practice; owing very much to ill-managed Disputes; especially, when I see it most prevailing.

I have had, and still have " * sad and too just apprehensions, that an intemperate fiery zeal for Truth, or the shadow and appearance of it, without regard to the End of all the Truth of the Gospel, has been the most fatal Error in the Christian World, and the great Original of all the Corruptions under which it groans. Truth in another sense, viz. Sincerity, is by this means fallen in our streets, and treated as the most criminal thing in the world; and he is scarce esteem'd as a Christian Brother, that has Christian Charity, without which all Truth, and the knowledge of all Mysteries, can profit a Man nothing. In our Scuffles for Truth, we seem to think our obligations to love one another cancell'd, and the Spirit of CHRIST in every instance of it is lost. Earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom, to the scandal of our holy Profession, takes place of the Wisdom from above. *We profess to know God, more than our neighbours; but in works we deny him.* We boast of Truth, but what are we the better for it in our Hearts, and Lives? Instead of *provoking one another to love and good works*; we more than waste our time in provoking one another to envying, and strifes; railings, and evil-furnisings; confusion, and every evil work; to the subversion of our souls."

I THINK myself bound in Conscience, as a Christian, and a Minister, and that too by solemn Vows at Sacraments, and my Ordination, to oppose that fatal Error; which strikes at the vitals of all true Religion; and to do what I can to advance the principle, and encourage the practice of a Charity as extensive as the Foundation, which, I think, CHRIST himself has laid for it; by my example, publick discourses, and conversation; how unfashionable soever the attempt is grown. I must do by others, as I think it reasonable they should do by Me in the same cases. I must not judge their hearts, or that to be in them, which they don't discover; or suspect, that, when any one judges, or determines for himself, in a Controversy, against an opinion I have entertain'd,

tertain'd, it is from pride, self-conceit, unreasonable humour, or want of impartiality in his enquiries; tho' he is ready to give me, if upon a just occasion I desire it, all the evidence that the nature of the thing will admit, that he has not lov'd darkness, but open'd both eyes, and faithfully examin'd the matter: especially, if it be notorious, that he has not been influenced by carnal motives, as the Scripture hereticks of old; since he has chosen to expose himself to sufferings, as the Apostles, first Reformers, and Ministers in this Island, ejected in 1662. I must not thus judge: for I don't think it reasonable that another should so judge Me without cause; and especially, against so much evidence in my favour. I must be studious of putting the best construction upon the words and actions of others, that they will bear. I must resent injustice to my neighbour, tho' not my friend, yea, tho' my enemy, as if it were to myself; contradict false and injurious reports of him; and discourage groundless and uncharitable surmises, but especially, a railing and backbiting tongue. I think it reasonable that a Man should first tell Me, to my face, what he blames me for, rather than other people, without just occasion or necessity; and I must therefore prefer this method in my treatment of others. When I have a just occasion, as in defence of myself or others, to speak of any; I must make conscience of saying for 'em, what they have to say for themselves, so far as I know it, as well as what I or others have to say against 'em. I think it hard that any should be shy of conversing with Me, tho' my life be not irregular; merely upon the account of an apprehension different from theirs; and therefore I must not carry it so towards others that differ from me; but esteem and own them as better than myself, or those of my mind; if their conversation be more becoming the Gospel, "tho' I should think, they have less of Truth, and consequently less of light, and motive to direct and incline 'em to it." If I think the uncharitableness that I observe in any, is owing to mistakes of judgment; I must endeavour, when occasion is offer'd me, to rectify those mistakes: and if opinions are, in my hearing, ascrib'd to any persons, authors, or bodies of people, of whatever denomination, which, for ought appears, are not theirs; especially, when they themselves upon all occasions disown them; I must not then be silent, tho' personally unconcern'd; but as

forward to discover the error in vindication of the absent, as I would in any case of self-defence. And therefore, if consequences are ascrib'd to people of such or such opinions, which they don't see or own; tho' I myself might think them justly drawn, and good arguments against those opinions; I must, however, in that case discover the injustice. I may apprehend that the opinions which some entertain of the divine Conduct, are such as, by necessary and unavoidable consequence, rob God of the Glory of those Perfections which make Him amiable, and leave Him only the name of such attributes, as Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth; and therefore, whilst I have this apprehension, joyn'd with a faint resemblance of those imitable Perfections in myself, and a veneration for the Supreme BEING, as the infinite Source and Original of All; I must needs abhor those opinions: which yet I am sure I can do consistently with a value for those that embrace them, without seeing their consequences, in proportion to the measure of their piety, and true goodness appearing in their lives. Against evidence to the contrary, I must not suspect that the contagion, tho' as deadly poyson, has infected their vitals. If they love God, I must love Them; tho' I fear I myself could not love Him upon their principles; and, whatever I think of those principles themselves, if I should (tho' I don't remember I ever did) hear any say, 'tis the opinion of these men, that God is not wise, holy, just, good, or true; I should be so just as to contradict it, and urge their conversation, as well as their profession to the contrary. On the other hand, from the same Principle of Justice and Charity, when I hear another sort of people censur'd for denying the Grace of God, or the Lord that bought 'em; and am persuaded there is no just foundation for either, but that they hope to be saved by that Grace, and that Lord, in the Way of serious endeavours to yield the most absolute, unlimited, and unreserv'd Obedience to Him; I must endeavour to rectify that mistake also; whether I think it owing to a false report, or a too common credulity; or false reasoning, which it will then be my business to discover. I must, to the best of my knowledge, fairly represent what the Accus'd have to say for themselves; and therefore, equally, when they are not, as well as when they are, of my sentiments. If Censures, which I think in their nature

ture unjust, appear to me as owing to something worse than mistake; then, as contradiction is due to the false report, a faithful rebuke, or dislike some way or other testify'd, is also due to the person who makes, or spreads it: as when a Man shall, and perhaps again and again, assert, as from personal knowledge, that a fact has happen'd, or such a profession, for instance, has been made; when I know there is the most notorious evidence of the contrary; or shall repeat, nay, frequently repeat, an abusive report, of whatever kind, after he has again and again had all the evidence that could be given him, that it was, indeed, groundless and unreasonable; had nothing to say against that evidence, and sometimes profess'd so much satisfaction in it, as to declare a dislike of his own conduct, in spreading the report, and that he would not have done it, had he known as much before as he did then; when he shall thus, after all, spread the same again, without any thing new to offer, or throw in the balance against the former conviction; I must look upon this as no better than Slander, and accordingly discover my dislike of it: especially, if there be nothing in a Man's well known character, to support the stretching of one's Charity towards him. And if the persons injur'd be Ministers; or in any other capacity, wherein their usefulness may be remarkably lessen'd by such false reports; I am the more obliged to do them right: as when 'tis affirm'd to be their opinion, That a Man can save himself without the Grace of God; tho' they themselves have upon all occasions declar'd the contrary, both privately and publicly, and insisted on the Necessity of that Grace, and our Dependance upon it, and constantly express'd their sense of that Dependance in a Way of Prayer, as well as their Brethren; and the publishers of the injurious reports have also upon all occasions been put in mind of this.

PRINCIPLE XIII.

In the exercise of my Ministry I must endeavour by all proper means to serve the great Design of it, which is to make Men wise and good and happy.

I Must

I must consider my self as a Minister of that Word; in which the Truth is, (r) *by the manifestation of which I am to commend my self to every man's conscience in the sight of God*; and so * "act as a Minister of Light, and not of Darkness. I must discover what I can of it by laborious Study and fervent Prayer. I must allow this sacred Word to be its own Interpreter; compare one part of it with another; consider what is the drift and design of a discourse, before I pretend to form a judgment (or determine what is the sense) of a single verse or chapter; explain obscure places agreeably to the clear discoveries of the divine Nature in his Word and Works, the manifest design of the whole, and the numerous plain texts. What important Truth is manifest to me, I must endeavour to make manifest to my hearers, so far as 'tis needful and expedient with reference to their practice." I must *keep back nothing that is profitable*, and *not shun to declare to them all the Counsel of God*, in a Way suitable to their Capacities. "I ought by no means to offer any thing to 'em, which is not clear and consistent in my own mind; and must be very shy of troubling them with wrangling disputations, especially if they be such as I myself think doubtful;" and endeavour to make them sensible, that the things wherein serious Christians agree are vastly greater than those wherein they differ. "But yet it is my unquestionable Duty, the best I can, to encourage and assist them in their searches after Truth contain'd in the holy Scripture. As I am obliged to judge impartially what are the Interpretations it gives of itself; so I must influence my hearers what I can to do so too; and not be angry with 'em, if they'll take nothing upon trust from me, (or any else,) or if their honest enquiries lead 'em to persuasions different from mine, and they act according to these persuasions. I must do my utmost to acquaint 'em with the great Design of those sacred Writings, and to engage them to set the highest value upon so glorious a Treasure, and to give all diligence to improve it. I must not darken the great things of the christian law by words without knowledge, empty insignificant sounds, obscure, and to them at least, if not to myself, unintelligible Terms

(r) 1 Cor. iv. 2. * Ordination Serm. pag. 32, 33, 34.

Terms and Phrases, but make every thing as plain as I can to 'em. And, instead of * "insisting rigidly on disputable interpretations of Scripture by fallible men," or using any of those words or phrases contending parties are severally fond of, as their *Shibboleth*, respectively; I think I must prefer "the use of Scripture expressions, in which as Protestants we all agree, and which every one is concern'd to understand the best he can, as God shall direct and assist him;" being still, as formerly, of opinion, that, " 'Tis safe, and to the advantage of the Truth of God, when we speak of it in His own Language; such Truth especially, as 'tis impossible for us in the least measure to know any other way, but that of supernatural Revelation, and is of such a nature as to demand our utmost Reverence. Such are the doctrines of the Glorious and Ever-blessed Trinity, FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, represented in Scripture as Three distinct Persons; and the Redemption of the World by the Second of Them. If we run into more particular Explications of such Truth as this, we shall soon be bewilder'd, and lost in inconsistency: but if we content ourselves with what God has seen fit to reveal of these Matters to us; we have so much clear and important Truth for ourselves and people, as demands our most humble Gratitude. And, indeed, such is His Goodness, that whatever is most important and necessary, is always most clear and plain; that it may be intelligible and practical to the meanest Capacity." For my part, I have no notion of these things, that I can more plainly express in my own, than in Scripture language. As for particular methods of Preaching, I must use or lay aside any, as all circumstances consider'd, it may appear more or less conducive to the End propos'd.

PRINCIPLE XIV.

WHATEVER my Principles, or my Rules of Judgment and Practice are, I must, whilst I retain them, be Steady to them; or till I am convinc'd I was mistaken in them,

* Ordin. Serm. p. 36.

them; govern myself impartially by them in all cases, and upon all occasions whatever.

I Must not take them up to serve one Purpose, and lay them down to serve another; or give the least ground for suspicion, that *I walk in craftiness.*

I must not condemn others of a different persuasion, or enemies, for that which I justify, and perhaps think very commendable in myself, my friends, or those of my own persuasion: nor, on the contrary, must I commend any thing in These, of which in Those I think, and speak ill.

Being persuaded that every man has an equal claim to the liberty of private judgment, I must allow this liberty to others in as full an extent and latitude, as that in which I take it myself, and think they can't justly deny it me. I may suspect their Cause is not good, who are afraid of having it on equal terms inquir'd into; and must never conclude any thing to the disadvantage of Theirs, who, on the contrary, are willing to have the whole matter brought to Light; till it has been so. (a) *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved: but he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* I think, none should condemn me unheard, either as to opinion or practice, without knowing, or so much as a disposition to know by enquiry, what I have to say for myself. Such a judgment is rash, and unjust, every-where else as well as in a Court of Judicature; and therefore I must avoid it myself, and as I have opportunity, do what I can to engage others to avoid it. I think it very unreasonable, that in popish Countries protestant books, as well as the Bible, should be suppress'd, and the Eyes and Ears of people shut against what is written, and might be said in behalf of the Reformation. I blame the pretended Catholicks for this, and tell 'em, 'tis a sign they suspect their own Cause, when they are afraid of bringing it to the light, and submitting it to a fair and impartial examination. They may tell me of Heresy and Schism, and the danger that the

(a) John iii. 20, 21.

the laity, especially, might be in of having their faith subverted by needless curiosity, prying into those books, &c, and that they kept the Scriptures from them, that they might not *wrest them to their own destruction*; and the books of Hereticks, that they might not be poyson'd by them; and that the good Fathers of their Church in this only exercis'd a prudent and tender care, as natural parents in refusing to give knives and firebrands to their children. But this would not satisfy me in this case, and therefore should not in any other. I blame those Brethren of the Church of *England*, who discover an unwillingness that the Cause of protestant Dissenters should be fairly heard, and examin'd, and that they are not very well pleas'd, when any among themselves read their books, or hear what they have to say; but endeavour to conceal from them what we think, and declare to be the true state of the controversy between us: and therefore I must not act such a part myself, or desire, or be pleas'd that any of my own denomination, should in that, or any other Controversy act it; which I think must needs be to the disgrace and prejudice of any Cause, that is but capable of it; and of Truth, wherever it lies: but on the contrary, we must read, hear, and examine what is said by Men and Authors themselves of different persuasions; and not think it enough, to read on one side only in the quotations of the other, when we have, or may have opportunity to do otherwise. I must not imitate that Partiality myself, which I have blam'd in others, who " * will not, If " they can help it, permit those of their own Persuasion " to examine the matter (fairly) on both sides, whilst " they do it on one; by which method a narrow, and " uncharitable spirit, appears much more reasonable than " it would otherwise do. " With all my Powers I rejoyce, and bless the Good God, that for many years past, so far as I know myself, I have been deliver'd, from the bondage of such a spirit, and fix'd, rooted, and grounded in such Catholick and Christian Principles, Principles of universal Love and Charity, on the foundation laid for it, as I would not part with for a World. Which advantage I could not obtain, till I had Re-

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Solution

solution enough to comply with the Apostolical Canon,
 (2) **PROVE ALL THINGS:** And it is from my own happy
 Experience, as well as the Nature and Reason of Things,
 that I recommended free and impartial Inquiries to my
 Brethren, and suggested such an advantage as an argu-
 ment from them, "In matters of Controversy, whilst
 "the greater Weight of Evidence on one side de-
 "termines our opinion, the great Difficulties on the
 "other should command our Charity; and therefore
 "tis fit to read, and consider what is said on both
 "sides." And upon the same foundation, 'tis fit pri-
 vate Christians should be as impartial as Ministers, so far
 as their Inquiries reach. Nor can I love them, as I
 love myself; if I don't, on proper occasions, do my
 part to engage them to be so.

With all Protestants, "I acknowledge the holy
 "Scriptures for a sufficient and compleat Rule of faith
 "and life: and declare against the popish Principle of
 "believing as the Church believes; and claim, and
 "plead a Right for EVERY ONE to search those Scri-
 "ptures, and judge of the sense of them, the best he
 "can, for himself; and in matters purely religious, to be
 "govern'd by his own Conscience, and not another
 man's." I must not, therefore, blame any for it, when in
 the use of this their Right and Liberty, they judge and
 determine for themselves, tho' contrary to my per-
 suasion.

I condemn the Principle, That a man must hold
 fast the religion of his Country, in which he has been
 educated; and reject, and abhor any thing that ap-
 pears new and strange to him, as contrary to that do-
 ctrine, which he had receiv'd from fallible men; with-
 out ever seriously examining the Evidence offer'd in
 its favour, or, it may be, without so much as know-
 ing what it really is: and I must be steady to this my
 own Principle, by which I condemn that Principle and
 Practice, and not be pleas'd with it in Christians, Pro-
 testants, and Dissenters, whilst I blame it in the unbe-
 lieving *Jews, Pagans, Papists*, and others. To offer at
 the defence of the good Cause of our holy Religion
 against those adversaries to it, by Arguments taken
 from

from Education, Numbers, and human Authorities, is to betray, and give it up to them, or build it on their own sandy foundation. If such Arguments are good now, they were always good; and then they should have been sufficient to defend Paganism and Popery, against Christianity and the Reformation. If one must, Every one must, for the same reason live, and die in the Religion of his Country. If those Arguments are, in my opinion, weak; I should never use them in any case, or controversy whatever: since they are not sufficient to support a bad Cause; and can only disparage, and undermine a good one.

I blame those Managers of Controversy on the side of the Church of *England* against protestant Dissenters, who will not see the force of those Arguments against the Authority of an Establish'd Church, when offer'd by Us against Them, which they themselves think good, and use against Papists; but give us such Answers to them, as from a popish Priest they would think trivial. I fought therefore, myself to be steadily, and invariably governed by those Principles, which as a Protestant I espouse, and retain; and offer no Argument against any protestant Brethren, differing from me, in any Controversy whatever, which in a like Case I should not accept as forcible from a Papist; nor slight any offer'd me by a Protestant, which I myself should in a like case think valid enough, when offer'd by him against the Papist. v. g.

I thus argue with him against his doctrine of Transubstantiation, " * Truth can't contradict itself. A manifest Contradiction, is a manifest Falshood; and therefore can be no part of Christianity. There can be no such thing in the Word of God." Thence I conclude, that the explication you give of these words, *This is my Body*, can't be true; because it is absurd, self-inconsistent, and impossible.

Now shou'd I think the force of my Argument destroy'd, if he thus harangu'd me, " This is a matter of Faith and Revelation; and will you not submit to it? Are God's Oracles no more to you, than the Oracles of Reason? Is not Revelation then made a

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" fine

“ fine impertinence? If you will not believe this, your
 “ Reason is not humbled to know its own place. Let
 “ the Great God have leave to speak, if He please,
 “ something more than you can fathom, and demand
 “ your belief too.”

“ My reply might be, “ Friend, let Your Reason keep
 “ its own place; and then you will not believe as the
 “ Church believes, but judge for yourself; and yourself
 “ only; not for me, even in matters of Faith and Revela-
 “ tion. However, you must pardon me, if I take this liberty.
 “ God never obliged Mankind to receive the Scrip-
 “ tures as His Oracles, without rational evidence. And
 “ He has obliged me, in the use of that Reason, which
 “ He has given me for the best Purposes, and by which
 “ He has distinguish’d me from the Brutes, to search
 “ after the sence of them, rather than take the interpre-
 “ tations of fallible men upon trust. My Reason keeps
 “ its own place, whilst I thus search the Scriptures, and
 “ consider, whether what you say, is, or can be the
 “ sence of them. By asserting what can’t be true, to
 “ be a Revelation, you make Revelation something worse
 “ than an Impertinence. My Reason is not yet so hum-
 “ bled, as for me to believe, a body is not a body; or
 “ that one body is two, or can be in two, or two thou-
 “ sand distant places at the same time. I will not
 “ believe this, because you tell me, ’tis a matter of Faith,
 “ and the Lord of my Faith speaks it. The Great God
 “ is the Lord of my Faith; but you are not, nor are any
 “ of your Communion the Lords of it; no, nor yet the
 “ infallible Interpreters of His mind: nor, therefore, will
 “ I receive this your monstrous interpretation, till you
 “ can give me a convincing reason, that it is a good
 “ one; which, I dare say, you never can. I will receive
 “ nothing from any one as stamp’d with Divine Autho-
 “ rity, till I think I see the stamp, (or sufficient evidence,)
 “ with my own eyes; how weak soever they may be in
 “ comparison of yours; much less a thing of that nature,
 “ that it is impossible for me to believe it has such a
 “ stamp, and yet at the same time believe, *It is impos-
 “ sible for God to lie.*”

So stands my Argument good against the Papist. If
 then he should retort this very Argument upon me in
 what may appear to him a like case; or a Protestant
 should urge it against my explication, or the account I
 give

give him, of any other doctrine as contained in the holy Scripture, on the supposition, that there is no less of self-inconsistency in this, than there is in that popish explication of our Saviour's words; I must not deny the force of that Argument against me, on that supposition; or expect he should take as a good answer, the same talk of Faith and Mystery, which in the Papist I thought insufficient for his purpose. No; If I will not drop the Argument in the Controversy with the Papist; I must take the just consequence of maintaining it, and be consistent with myself. And then I must either confess my error in the explication which I had given, or, to maintain the truth and justice of it, shew, that the supposition is not just; and that, tho' in the popish interpretation of Scripture there is a self-inconsistency, in mine there is none.

I must not blame any for a stedfast adherence to the Principle of private judgment, which I applaud, not only in the primitive Christians, but in the first Reformers.

I am persuaded, that JESUS CHRIST is the only Law-maker in His own Kingdom; that the Commission of the Apostles was not to lay their own Commands on any, but to *(b) teach whatsoever He himself had commanded them*; and that none after them have had, or must expect a larger; and consequently, that (tho' such circumstances of worship, as time, place, &c. in the general necessary, are to be particularly determined by, and for the convenience of, those immediately concern'd,) no power is lodg'd any where on earth to make any new term of christian communion, or any qualification necessary to the sacred office, which *Christ* himself hath not made so. Upon this Principle, I blame those who pretend to a power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and establish and impose Forms of Prayer, and cast out, and brand their non-conforming Brethren, as a Company of Schismatics. Amongst these last, I chearfully take my Lot; and *after the way which their enemies call Schism, so worship I the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And I should thus dissent, tho' I look'd on the things impos'd as ever so innocent in their own nature; thinking myself obliged thus to *(c) Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made me free*, and to protest, so

(b) *Matth. xxviii. 20.*

(c) *Gal. v. 1.*

X In far as I can, against every usurpation upon His Pre-
 rogative. Now, that I may be ready to this Principle, I
 must as much dislike enjoying Creeds of human Com-
 position, as Ceremonies of human Invention; and ra-
 ther more, than less; because if I own the power of the
 Church as to the former of these, it will be in vain for
 me to deny it as to the latter. If I must receive a Creed
 of their making, viz. their interpretations of Scripture,
 how can I hinder their making this to be one Article?
 viz. That the Church, i. e. They themselves, have an
 indisputable Authority to decree what Rites and Ceremo-
 nies they please. I must, therefore, disclaim every *Tasr*
Canaan, but the *Bible*, for Christians. I can't, in the
 South part of *Great Britain*, declare my unfeigned assent
 and consent to all and every thing contain'd in the Book
 of *Common Prayer*: nor could I, without a change of
 Principle, submit to that *Tasr*, tho' I did believe every
 thing in that Book. Nor would I, therefore submit to
 the like in the North, as to the *Assembly's Confession*. I
 X publicly use, and have for many years, their *Catechism*,
 with another in the words and phrases of Scripture, said to
 be composed by Dr. *Fowler*, late Bishop of *Glocester*, alter-
 nately, and ordinarily both, every Lord's-day in the Sum-
 mer. And, I think, none can justly blame me for this
 exercise of my liberty, as to either of these. Nor must
 I blame those that use neither of them, for that; any
 more than for not using the *Church-Catechism*, or the
 established Forms of Prayer. I determine for myself:
 and so must they.

I should think it very unbecoming, and unjust in
 any of our enemies, to apply King *GEORGE'S* Procla-
 mation against the profane, debauch'd, and vicious; or
 any passage in one of his most Excellent Speeches, ma-
 nifestly design'd against a jacobite and rebellious Faction,
 that would dethrone him, to his good protestant dissent-
 ing Subjects, who live regularly, and are most zealous
 for the establishment of his Throne against all Pretenders
 whatever. Nor would it, in my opinion, be enough for
 them to say, "These Dissenters are an obstinate Faction;
 " people are seduced by their craft; they disturb and
 " trouble us this way, tho' not that of which his Majesty
 " speaks; they are a very ill sort of Men." And there-
 fore, whilst I condemn this, I must not apply any De-
 claration of Scripture, manifestly design'd against *Nico-*
laitans,

and men of the vilest character, enemies of the cross of Christ, and living in the most impudent and daring Rebellion against Him, (I must not, I say, apply any such Declaration) to those that are studious to please Him in all things, and jealous of his Honour.

I don't think the worse of Christianity, or the Reformation itself, for the unsuitable and irregular lives of those call'd Christians, and Protestants; nor the better of Paganism, or Popery; because some, who profess it, live better. And therefore, in like manner I must judge of all other Principles, by their nature, and tendency; and not by the Characters of those that profess, and maintain them. Truth may be held in unrighteousness; and error be under the government and controul of piety and christian virtue.

I must always think Injustice in a Christian to a Turk, or Pagan, to be as bad, or worse than in a Turk or Pagan to a Christian.

FINALLY, I must not blame others for preaching Controversy; and yet preach it myself.

PRINCIPLE XV.

I Must be willing to change my Principles, and no longer to act according to them; when such Evidence is offer'd me, as needs only an impartial Consideration, to make it sufficient for my Conviction, that I was mistaken in them.

As I know but in part; I must be willing to know more. And as I am liable to mistakes; I must keep at the utmost DISTANCE from a conceit of infallibility, and no more close my eyes against the Light, that wou'd discover my mistakes to me, than be fond of those mistakes when actually discovered. And I must add, That,

I Am equally obliged to part with a Principle, or SET of Principles, when ever they appear to me to be wrong; so as to be no longer govern'd by them; and to hold fast what appears to be right, till on further examination it appear to be otherwise. But,

THIS

That last Principle does not offer itself to me with more evidence, than all, or any of the foregoing. I can therefore no more suspect, that I am mistaken in any of the rest, than that I am in this. Having once consider'd the nature of things, I am no more obliged to entertain a doubt, whether They are good, than whether This be so, viz. That I must change Principles, when a reason is offer'd me for it, which must appear a good one, if I do but consider it. If any man will affirm to me, that either of us should be willing to maintain any of his former opinions, notwithstanding a Reason so sufficient for the change of them, that it must be convincing, if it be but consider'd; and will pretend to prove his assertion; I may hear what he says, and endeavour to be serviceable to him, if I know how; but can't expect Him to be so to Me, by any argument he can offer to prove a thing, which is really neither more, nor less than this, that one who can see, should chuse with closed eyes to walk in darkness; that a reasonable creature should act unreasonably, or against Reason. And I say the same, with reference to every one of the above-mention'd Principles.

AND therefore, whilst I own the obligation which lies on me, and every one else, to a CHANGE OF PRINCIPLES, when such evidence is offer'd, as needs only impartial Consideration, to make it sufficient for Conviction of a mistake in them; I am not inconsistent with myself, tho' I also declare, that in some cases that evidence is never to be expected. My last Principle shall therefore be,

PRINCIPLE XVI.

SOME Principles are of such a nature, that IMPARTIAL CONSIDERATION can never oblige, or so much as permit us to change them.

TO I. THERE are such Principles, that the very moment we know, and consider what they are, we must needs approve them as reasonable. And, I am well satisfied, that there is not a single Principle amongst those which I have here laid down, as

Rules

Rules of Conduct, but what is of that number. And let any one that has read, and understood them, (which could be no hard task to a willing mind,) doubt of it, if he can.

Who that knows the import of these words, [GOD, man, ill-name, and guilty Conscience,] can question, Whether it be reasonable, that GOD should be pleas'd rather than man; and an ill-name chosen, rather than a guilty Conscience? which is the first of those Principles. And the like I can venture to say of all that follow, in their order. Who that hears of such things in a language that he understands, and observes what he hears, can doubt, Whether it be reasonable, that He, as well as I, should be cautious of thinking ill of any one, merely for his having an ill-name, without good evidence, that it justly belongs to him; that he should have a special value for those whom he thinks to be the friends of GOD; that no mistakes of judgment, nor any thing else, consistent with their being so, should destroy his brotherly-kindness towards them? Who that knows, and considers the nature of the thing, and expresses declarations of Scripture, can doubt, Whether indeed, and in his Lord's account, conformity to His example and laws, is the best, and greatest evidence any one can have, or give of his love to Him and the Father; or whether this, which is the End, is better than faith or knowledge, which, at best, can be but the means; and therefore, whether an humble disposition, with seriousness, diligence, and impartiality, to search after, that he may know, and do his Lord's will, is also of much more value and consequence to him, than the bare knowledge of any, or all particular truths, or christian doctrines? Can a Man, a Christian, consider, and yet doubt, Whether, besides his general love to mankind, it be reasonable in an especial manner to distinguish, both in mind and carriage, those who live up to their holy profession, from those that are a scandal to it; and whether in the affair of Religion, which is of greatest importance to him, he should examine what he can about it, rather than take it on trust; or, whether it be reasonable for him, not to judge for others, or for himself, in matters of controversy, of which he thinks he is not capable of examining, or however, has not yet examin'd the evidence; and not to pretend to judge of,

believe, or teach what he does not so much as understand; not to receive from others, or use himself, words which are to him no better than empty sounds; words without a meaning, or without a consistent meaning? Who that knows, what Disputes are, what Ends may be proposed by them, and their different Management; but must presently see the tendency and consequences, and conclude, that they may be very useful, or very hurtful, as well or ill design'd, and managed? Who can, even on his first thoughts, doubt, Whether it be Rational and Christian, for him to take all fit occasions, and opportunities given him, in the best manner he can, to discountenance an unchristian temper and practice? Can a Minister of the Gospel, believe the reality, and understand the nature of his office; and yet question his obligation to endeavour, by the best and most proper methods he can, to serve the great design of it, *viz.* to make men wise, and good, and happy? Can he, or any one else, find place for doubt, Whether, whatever his principles, or rules of judgment and practice are, he should be steady to them, whilst he retains them; or, till he is convinced he was mistaken in them, govern himself impartially by them, in all cases, and upon all occasions whatever? in short, Whether he should be consistent with Himself, his Principles, and Profession? Can any one doubt, Whether he should be willing to change his principles, and no longer act according to them, when such evidence is offered him, as needs only an impartial consideration to make it sufficient for his conviction, that they were indeed his mistakes? And as to this last of all,

CAN he doubt, Whether some Principles are of such a nature, that impartial Consideration can never oblige, or so much as permit him to change them; provided, this Principle, after the rest, be but explained to him, and Instances of those principles it refers to, laid before him?

As soon as ever I see such figures, as a Circle and a Square, and compare them, I may without delay be positive, for I infallibly know, that one of those figures is not the other, nor like it. And he that would pretend to prove to me, that the Circle is the Square, or, (which is the same thing,) that a Circle is not a Circle; could not, I am sure, deserve my attention. And if
upon

upon my refusing it, he should retort on me any thing I have said against Confidence in opinion, as to disputable, and disputed points, and unwillingness to hear what might be said against it; if he tell me, That in this matter I carry it as if I myself had a conceit of Infallibility; I might, in reply, tell him, That pretensions to Infallibility, or Certain Knowledge, without Certain Evidence, are what I still disclaim: but the pretensions are just, when grounded on such Evidence. I, and he too, (if he knows what the figure of a circle, square, and triangle are,) infallibly know, that there can be no such thing as a round Square, or triangular Circle, as we do, that two and two do not make five. When I see a Triangle, I may, without the least breach of modesty, or humility, be positive, that two of the sides, taken together, are greater than the third, before I know, and tho' I never know, the Demonstration, which a Mathematician gives of it.

AND there are Principles of a moral nature, to which a Reasonable Creature must needs *consent that they are good*, as soon as they are explained to him, and he does but know, and consider what they are: as in those, comprehensive of all I have insisted on as Rules of Conduct, That we should love God, and our neighbour; seek our own happiness in the perfection of our natures; and do to, or for, Others, whatever we think it reasonable, they should do to, or for, Us, were we in their case, and they in ours.

I have a notion of what is Rational, as also of what is Christian; not so much from the Lives of Christians, as from my Bible; in which I find nothing offered as Christian, which is not Rational. And hence it is, that knowing, and considering what the above-mention'd Principles are, I think myself as sure that they, and such as they, are indeed Rational and Christian, as I am, or can be, that God has made me a Reasonable Creature; and not a Brute. This, at least, I must say, if They are not Rational and Christian; I don't know any thing that is so.

THE angry Managers of speculations, and points of controversy amongst us, may have equal Confidence in respect of them, that They are in the right, and others in the wrong. But I can't persuade myself, they have equal grounds

grounds for it. Are their opinions of that nature; that the very moment, in which any one knows, or considers what they are, he must needs approve them as reasonable? If so, why are the controversies about them not yet ended, even amongst the wise and good?

2. THE more we allow of impartial and serious Consideration to these Principles and Rules, the more we shall be rationally confirm'd and establish'd in them.

As they are truly Divine; so we may observe some such difference between them, and such Principles as owe their original to the imagination of men's brains; as has been observ'd between the works of Nature, and those of Art. The more we search into, and the more we know of the former, the more we know of their exquisite and inimitable beauties, the more we are surpriz'd and charm'd by the fresh Traces we discover of divine Wisdom, Power, and Goodness: but, ordinarily, the more we search into the works of Art, the more we discover of their imperfection.

THESE Divine Principles need no vail of darkness to hide their deformity. They need no arts of disguise, or varnish, to make them appear better than they are. Let them but appear what they are; and their native Simplicity, and Glory will be charming to all, but Brutes and Devils. They need no favour. It will be enough to do them, and yourselves, justice. Don't deny them that; and, as true Gold, they will stand the severest trial. Let in all the Light you can upon 'em from every Quarter. Let no Avenue of it be shut up. Let Earth and Hell say all they can say, against them; and consider what they say; if you will but as well consider, at the same time, what these noble Principles offer to recommend themselves to you. Examine the pleas of Folly; if, at the same time, you will but impartially examine the pleas of Wisdom too. These Principles, I hope, are dearer to me than my life; but I can never think them in danger by means of any trial that is fair, and impartial. Their Cause is good, and the Cause of Truth; and can be in no danger from reason and argument. Whoever appears, against 'em, must prove, if he can, either that they are not Rational and Christian; or that, if they are, every one who calls himself a Christian, is not bound to observe, and be govern'd by them. In short,

THE better you understand these Principles, and the more

more strictly you inquire into the grounds, and evidences of them; so much the better will you like them; so much the more will you be confirm'd, and rationally establish'd in them. The more you think of them, and the more you practise them; the more amiable they will still appear to you, and the better Men, and Christians you will be; the more like to your Great Master; the better you will enjoy Him, and yourselves, the greater Ornaments you will be to your profession, and Blessings to the world in which you live; the more you will have of a Heaven upon earth; and the fitter you will be for those pure and perfect, peaceful and happy Regions, where the GOD of LOVE will be ALL in ALL.

SUCH is the imperfection of the present state; that Diversity of Opinions is unavoidable, even amongst the sincere part of mankind. There will be none in the World of LIGHT, whither we profess to be going. Let us all walk worthy of the Hopes of admittance into it, and being for EVER with the LORD. Let us testify our Love to HIM, by doing whatsoever He has commanded us; and our Love to the LEAST of His Brethren, and our Fellow-servants, who thus also obey Him, in all the ways, to which such a disposition may direct us. *(d) Whereto we have already attained; let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* Let us mind the One Thing needful, and be closely united in our affections. To this purpose is that earnest intreaty of the Apostle to the Corinthians, *(e) I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions amongst you; but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.* We may be sure, that he did not here think of establishing an impracticable Scheme, for uniting a divided people; viz. Uniformity of opinions. No; he would only have them to be of the same, or of one, mind; and that the mind, the spirit of CHRIST, such a mind as was in HIM; and kindly and tenderly affected one towards another. For if they became so, there would be a present cure of their divisions. And how passionately does he, to the same purpose, address himself to the Philipians, *(f) If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if*
any

(d) Phil. iii. 16: (e) 1 Cor. i. 10. (f) Phil. ii. 1-3.

any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same (or mutual) love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. And his prayer for the Romans, together with his exhortation to them, runs thus, (g) The God of patience, and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, (or his Gospel;) that ye may with one mind, and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Let us all unite in pursuing the grand design of the glorious and everlasting Gospel: and instead of something worse than bare wasting of our time by clamour, and evil-speaking, (h) let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works. (i) And giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind: tho' he may say, I see. And, (k) Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are (worthy) of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. The Rational, and Christian Principles, above-mention'd, must needs be included here. And had they, according to this divine exhortation, been duly considered and practised, our Lord would not have had so many wounds in the house of his supposed friends; nor the excellent, and worthy name, by the which we are called, have been so much exposed.

WHENEVER they have justice done them, and are thought of as they ought to be, a Golden Age will appear. For then,

1. LESS necessary things, I mean, such as are less, if at all, necessary to practical purposes, will be less thought on;

(g) Rom. xv. 5-7.

5-9. (h) Phil. iv. 8.

(k) Heb. x. 24.

(i) 1 Pet. i.

on; the weightier matters of the Christian Law, in a just proportion of degree, engaging all our powers.

2. TRUTH will prevail more than ever. For then an humble disposition with seriousness, diligence, and impartiality to seek it, will be practis'd, and encouraged; as now 'tis clogg'd, and discountenanc'd; and all manner of assistance will be freely given, and kindly receiv'd, in the search; and to be sure, the divine aids will not be wanting to the humble Inquirers. (l) *Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.* (m) *The earth shall be filled with it, as the waters cover the bottom of the sea.* For then it may be hoped, that the Gospel will spread as at the first, the WHOLE WORLD become CHRISTIAN, and that CHRISTIAN WORLD be in such a state of purity as has never yet been known, at least, since the days of the Apostles. And as Truth will then prevail more than ever; as a consequence of that,

3. THERE will be less Diversity of Opinions, than now there is. Contrary judgments can't be form'd, but there must be Truth on one side, and Error on the other: for between Truth and Truth there can be no contradiction. And therefore in the Regions of LIGHT, where there is nothing but Truth, there must be an entire agreement in persuasion. One, indeed, may have more Truth, or Knowledge than another: but since he that has least, is supposed to have it without the least mixture of error, he can't differ in sentiment from one that has most of it. The knowledge he has, can be no more contrary to a greater degree of it, than a less light is contrary to a greater. And hence it follows, That the more mankind in this imperfect state have of Light and Knowledge; and consequently, the less of ignorance and error; so much the less Diversity there will be of Opinions: tho' as long as there is any error at all, there will be a diversity in proportion to it.

4. THAT remaining Diversity of Opinions will have no inconvenience attending it, but such as must belong to such a state of imperfection, as this is; the inconvenience that we are men, and not Angels; mortals, and not the Spirits of the just made perfect, or Saints in Light.

Dis-

(l) *Dan. xii. 4.*

(m) *Hab. ii. 14.*

Disputes well designed and managed, conscientious, calm, sober, peaceable, charitable, and friendly, in a word, Rational and Christian, as they will every day lessen that Diversity, by the increase of Knowledge, and lessen the appearance of Diversity, where there is really none, by a right understanding one of another; so they will promote, and advance the Christian Life, as much as ill-natur'd, ill-design'd, and ill-managed Disputes are destructive to it.

We must not imagine, That the World above us is so perfect as to have no ignorance; tho' it be so perfect as to have no error. Even the blest inhabitants of THAT World, don't know all things; either of God, or his works: for then they would be *as Gods* indeed. 'Tis therefore a reasonable presumption, that they will be increasing in Knowledge to all ETERNITY; and that they will be assistant one to another in their Inquiries; tho' in ways beyond our present conceptions. But Love still keeping pace with Knowledge, partly at least, the fruit of those Inquiries, their Joys, instead of being diminish'd, will likewise at all times be increasing. So proportionably will it be, as Love and mutual Good-will gets place on earth, as it has in Heaven. Then every Eye will be open to Light; every Heart, and Tongue confess, and welcome every Beam of it; and every fresh discovery will be received as an unspeakable Kindness, a fresh endearment and bond of Love.

In those happy days, it will on all hands be acknowledg'd, and that more than in words, That *other Foundation can no Man lay better than that which is laid already, by CHRIST and his Apostles in His Name, for Union amongst his Friends and Followers, viz. That of SINCERE AND UNIVERSAL OBEDIENCE TO HIS LAWS*: The fence of which every man must determine for himself; or else no man: since He has made no distinction; nor appointed any Authoritative Judge, or Judges of controversy about it on earth. Then that ROYAL FOUNDATION will be clear'd from all manner of Inclosures, human Tests, Creeds, Ceremonies, &c. by which it had been sacrilegiously narrow'd and straitned for the Exclusion of many of His friends, and that many Times to make way for his enemies. Then (and who that *loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, would

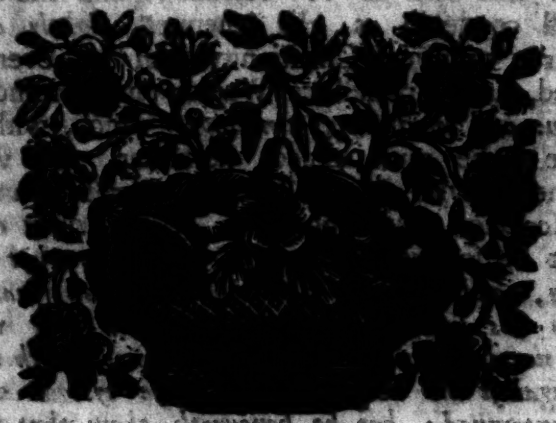
not say, *Amen*, to the prayer, That *His Kingdom may thus come*, and come quickly? then I say,) all these Inclosures will be thrown down; and all Engines of division remov'd, and destroy'd together; the *Dagon* of Party-zeal be famish'd, for want of provision made for it, and the flames of Hell on earth be extinguished. Then (n) *the proud and haughty-foerner shall no more deal successfully in proud wrath*; but be (o) *cast out*, and *contention cease* for ever. Then the disciples of the MEEK AND HUMBLE JESUS will be like their Master; and known, dignified, and distinguished by the Badge he himself had given them (p); and the admiring world again say, BEHOLD, HOW THEY LOVE ONE ANOTHER! Then the LAST JUDGMENT will in some respect be happily anticipated, the RULE of it observed, and a Distinction made between the righteous and the wicked, so far as they appear in those different Characters; those own'd that the GREAT JUDGE will own as His Friends; and those whom He will condemn as His enemies, *lightly esteemed*. Then true practical Christianity will be every-where honoured, and a perfidious Wretch put in mind of the (q) *shame and everlasting contempt*, which, without repentance, he must expect hereafter, by what he justly meets with here. Then a Christian answering the Description long ago given of a Citizen of Zion, will not be so great a Rarity; (r) *One that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD.*

To expect such Things, is to expect a NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH, wherein dwellers righteousness. But, LORD, how long! I should rejoyce to see the Day come: but can only rejoyce to see it afar off: I fear, this generation will, and with many more may not, first pass away. Whenever it dawns, the Reformation will be vastly greater, than ever we have
I yet

(n) Prov. xxi. 24. (o) Prov. xxii. 10. (p) John
xiii. 35. (q) Dan. xii. 2. (r) Psal. xv. 1-4.

yet had to glory in. Then shall the (a) wickedness
of the wicked come to a perpetual end; and the just
be established. Then may the HAPPY PEOPLE say:
GOD IS WITH US, HEAVEN come down to Earth;
and Hell is alarm'd and confounded, for Satan knows
that his Time is but short.

(c) Psal. vii. 9.



THE

(a) Prov. xxi. 10. (b) Job
(c) Psal. xli. 1-4



THE APPENDIX



ONE who do themselves justly bear those noble and excellent characters of RATIONAL and CHRISTIAN, can, (I easily presume,) once think of denying the PRINCIPLES I have laid down as RULES of CONDUCT, to be also truly such. And if they are; they must needs justify me in acting according to them. If I have been mistaken in the application of any one, or more of them; I shall be obliged to the man, who shews me that error of my understanding, in the spirit of meekness: but such a discovery will by no means render invalid the Testimony of my own Conscience, that I acted according to the best Light I had. What I have to say in general, is,

1. As I am sure I came honestly into the possession of these Principles; so, I know nothing for which I can blame myself in the Application of them, after the closest and most serious Review I have hitherto been able to make.

2. Tho' I have my share of human infirmities, I can, and do sincerely profess That I have, for the course of many years, made these Principles the Rules of my Conduct,

Just in my private, and more publick capacity; faithfully endeavouring, in all cases without Prejudice or Partiality, to govern my thoughts, affections, words and actions by them.

I have been, I hope, careful to please God rather than man; to *think and speak well of no man*, merely because others do; to love and own all whom I think men of *simplicity and godly sincerity*, for that very reason. I have with the greatest readiness embraced opportunities to serve such, when I knew them to be of a persuasion very different from my own. I have kept friendly correspondence with them; and frequently taken pleasure in speaking honourably of them. As to this, I can't want Testimonies amongst my most intimate Friends and Acquaintance, or in the Consciences of any, who have been of that number, tho' they should now be in the number of my enemies, of whom several others could sincerely enough afford me theirs. And, I think, I may safely challenge all, who, for I know not how many years back, have had any manner of conversation with me, if they will not exceed the bounds of their knowledge, to produce a single instance of my passing the least reflection upon any one for differing in opinion from me. My pleading (with which I am justly charged) so much for Charity to others, has, I know, been ascribed to a consciousness in my own breast, that I need a great deal of it for myself. But, whatever I need, I am, I can truly say, conscious of having acted from a nobler principle, than that of selfishness; even a concern for the common rights of mankind, and christians, and the fulfilling of the Law and Gospel. I don't know by any experience of late years, what a temptation means to think ill of any person, of whom before I thought well, merely for the change of opinion. Much less have I given any manner of occasion for a report industriously spread at a considerable distance, if not nearer home, of my acting against one from a prejudice taken upon that account. And, whoever have done me this wrong, I am persuaded that the thoughts of the Person immediately concern'd, are as far from accusing me in this matter, as my own are. And, if my memory don't at present fail me, this is the only wrong I have ever known to be done me of that kind: which therefore I may the more contentedly bear; tho' what has nearest resemblance

blance to it, is, That of my practising as an Incendiary, for no other reason that I know of, but that of my declaring myself *against* Incendiaries, and endeavouring upon certain occasions to quench the flames after them. If some think this was over-doing, and to be too busy and officious; all I have to regret about it, when I retire to take account of myself, is, that I have done no more: and some events make it past all contradiction, that Satan was vastly more busy, and by that means, perhaps, more successful than I have been.

I have abhor'd, and must always abhor, insincere professions, whether of change of opinion, or any thing else, as well as malice, back-biting, reviling, and other *fruits of the flesh*. I could, and can, easily find in my heart to esteem a Man, who is conscientiously inquisitive after the mind and will of God, and practises what he knows of it, whatever mistakes I may think him under, whether old, or new. As on the other hand, I have been sincerely grieved to find myself mistaken in, or obliged to change the good opinion I had entertain'd of any one, by clear evidence of irregularities unbecoming the Gospel: and seldom has any thing happen'd to me more afflictive, than an instance of that nature. And in that case, agreement of opinion has not with me in the least supply'd the Want of Integrity, or made me backward to give seasonable, and faithful Reproofs, and to protest against a manifestly insincere, and injurious person, *going on* impenitent, and hardened in his *trespasses*; tho' the notion I before had of his character as unblemished, had ever so much endear'd him to me. I have long accusom'd myself to put the best construction upon the words and actions of others, I could think of as what the matter would bear. I have been sorry, when I could not find a good one; and impartially blamed whatever I thought inexcusable, where-ever I observ'd it. Instead of rejoicing in the scandalous miscarriages of others; tho' of a different persuasion, or my enemies; I have truly lamented them; as I have the necessity they have sometimes laid me under, of acting an ungrateful part; which yet I have delay'd so far as I could with a safe conscience, and till I had done all in my power to remove the occasion of that necessity. And I have felt and exercised all imaginable tenderness towards those who have given sufficient proofs of their being penitent and humbled.

I have no enemies concerning whom, I can't sincerely, and at in the presence of God, declare, That *my heart desire, and prayer for them is; That they may be saved.* I forbear adding what I might add concerning some; but say of them all, That I should be very glad, were it in my power, to contribute to their Happiness. Nor am I so much concerned for the wrong they have done, or are capable of doing me; as for the greater, which, in my apprehension, they have done, and do to their own souls.

I have been studious in all cases, (as one heartily inclined) *to do to others, whatever I thought it reasonable for others to do to me.* It has been my way, on all proper occasions, to tell persons themselves what I thought them most concerned to know, viz. their Faults; rather than neglecting that, without any just occasion, or necessity, to talk such things of them to others. Nor have I confined this method to people of the meanest circumstances; or to my enemies. I have sometimes made Friends my Enemies, by acting towards them what I thought the part of a faithful Friend, who must not flatter, but *speaks the truth as his heart.* I have as much resented injuries to my neighbour, as to myself; and been as forward to shew my resentment of them. It has therefore been customary with me to contradict false reports, and shew a dislike of uncharitable surmises; but especially of the most injurious; yet too too general practise of backbiting: tho' in that, I don't know that I have stretched King Solomon's Maxim beyond his intention, viz. (a) *The north wind driveth away rain; so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.*

I have discountenanced vice, profaneness, and immorality; and encouraged informations to the Magistrate against incorrigible promoters of it, those *that sineth, and made others to sin.*

I have been careful to search impartially after the mind of God in his word, in those methods which I thought pleasing to Him; and, as opportunity served, and the case required, considered both sides of the question, before I determined on one.

AND, notwithstanding a report, which has been spread with great industry, and can be traced to the Barb, ten miles from the place of my abode, and to Dromsbire where, I presume, it was first raised; ~~which about the year 1710, 1711, 1712, 1713, 1714, 1715, 1716, 1717, 1718, 1719, 1720, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, 1725, 1726, 1727, 1728, 1729, 1730, 1731, 1732, 1733, 1734, 1735, 1736, 1737, 1738, 1739, 1740, 1741, 1742, 1743, 1744, 1745, 1746, 1747, 1748, 1749, 1750, 1751, 1752, 1753, 1754, 1755, 1756, 1757, 1758, 1759, 1760, 1761, 1762, 1763, 1764, 1765, 1766, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775, 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794, 1795, 1796, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, 1821, 1822, 1823, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833, 1834, 1835, 1836, 1837, 1838, 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that I don't remember, that I have heard of it as near home than the place first mention'd; viz. That I spent my time in siding up and down the Country, to make Profelytes to some opinion, or other. As I solemnly declare this Report to be absolutely false, and groundless; so I believe, few, if any, have been less forward than myself to engage others in Disputes; being well apprized of their tendency, as commonly managed; and, so far as my knowledge reaches, none ever blamed me for any thing I ever said to them in that way, who did not themselves first engage me in them. And, I think, I have constantly given all the evidence I could, by the drift of my discourse, that the advancement of what I take to be a Christian Spirit, in opposition to its contrary, was what I had most at heart in them even when, as led to it, I have offered arguments, or objections and difficulties on one side, or on the other, or perhaps on both, (as the occasion was,) of the Controversy.

I have in the exercise of my Ministry, had regard to my Rule in that matter; particularly, have been ready to use, or lay aside any method, as all circumstances considered, it appear'd to me more, or less conducive to the End propos'd. And,

FINALLY, I can truly say, That I have been steady to my Principles, and careful to govern myself in all Cases by them; but dispos'd to part with any of them upon Conviction of a mistake in them: tho' such Conviction I never expect as to these plain, clear, practical, and most important, most Rational and Christian Principles.

3. I cannot at present see that I stand in need of having any other Principles granted me, than those I mention'd, to justify all the several parts of my Conduct, for which I have been censured, and expos'd, (and by some deferted) thro' the clamours of People, sometimes of one denomination, and sometimes of another, all of the same Spirit and Way, condemn'd of each other, and of themselves, or by their own Principles. Let it be but acknowledged, that it was not amiss for me to govern myself by them, in All Cases wherein they are applicable, to the best of my apprehensions; and I desire no more.

I was oblig'd for the first remarkable Clamour made against me, to a late Dignitary of the Church of England,

viz.

viz. Mr. Hill, Archdeacon of *Wells*, and some that
 accompany'd him to a Visitation, many years ago. The
 Occasion was, my defending the Body of Dissenters
 from one of those Gentlemen, when alone, who
 called them damn'd Schismatics, and after positively
 asserted, That not a Man of them could be saved
 by the Grace of the Gospel, even upon the sup-
 position I made of his sincere willingness, impar-
 tial and diligent endeavours, by Prayer, search of the
 Scriptures, &c. to know his duty, as to the point of Se-
 paration, and a regular Life, according to the Light he
 had: which I after repeated to the Archdeacon, when I
 found him engaging me to make good my Argument
 from the Principle of Conscience. "He urged against
 " me, the Case of the Idolatrous Jews, punished with
 " death, and those who offered their children to *Molech*:
 " both of which he supposed to act according to their
 " consciences." I deny'd that they did so act, in the
 sense explained, viz. after SERIOUS ENQUIRY, since those
 practices were expressly condemned in the Law, which
 they themselves owned to be of God; adding, That
 a Jew might as easily have known Idolatry to be Rebel-
 lion against God, as their King, as an *Englishman*
 might then know, that it was Treason against *Q. Anne*,
 to swear Allegiance to the Pretender. He next told me,
 " That by my Principles, *Mahometans* would be in Fa-
 " vour with God, if they acted according to their Con-
 " sciences." I owned, That by my Principle, God
 would not damn them for acting according to an un-
 avoidable mistake. I can't tell whether I also said
 any thing to this effect, That He would be pleased
 with them, if they did their best to please Him, or to
 know and do His Will. But, whether any of them
 did so; was not the question: nor, if it had; should
 I have presumed to determine it, but have left it to the
 Judge of Hearts. Nor cou'd I have thought it a just
 conclusion, That because he that improves the one ope-
 ly Talent he had committed to his trust, should be ac-
 cepted, and rewarded with one more; therefore, it was
 'utterly needless,' or no privilege to be entrusted with five
 Talents, and a capacity of obtaining five more in the
 improvement of them. After this, he told me, " That
 " by my Principle, the most idolatrous Pagans, and
 " even those that worshipped the Devil, were in Fa-
 " vour

"vour with G O D; if they acted according to their Con-
 "sciences." And immediately, before I said one word
 in reply, the Gentleman asserted to my face, as he did
 again and again afterwards, "That I myself had af-
 "firmed, that if a Man worshipped the Devil, he
 "would be in favour with G O D." And therefore, all
 I did say on that Head was, that I had said no such thing.
 But the Country was filled with the abusive Report; at
 which, after what I had heard myself, I could not be
 much surpriz'd. If it could be proved to me, that after
 utmost and impartial examination, a Man could not
 avoid thinking himself bound to worship the Devil,
 instead of the One Onely Living and True God, who
 yet would damn him for it; I know the consequence of
 it must be, the overturning my Principle, on which
 I ground my esteem and veneration for that Blessed and
 Glorious BEING. But I am well satisfy'd, that it is
 utterly impossible for Men or Devils to prove so mon-
 strous an Assertion; and therefore, abhor both that and
 the unavoidable consequence of it; and think it to be
 in its nature something worse than Atheism itself. For
 of the two, 'tis better to deny there is a G O D, than to
 represent Him as unrighteous. My mention of the Book
 called, *The Rights of the Christian Church*, was misplac'd
 (in the account which has been already given) at the begin-
 ning of my discourse with the Archdeacon, and as the oc-
 casion of it. I am very sure that I said nothing about it,
 till after I had parted with him, so as to see him no more.
 And then it was, after my denial that the Ecclesiasti-
 cal Courts, on the Authority of which the charge of
 Schism was renewed, had any Authority which they
 had not received from the Civil Government. With Re-
 ference to that, I asked, "If any one had answered
 "the *Rights*, &c." Upon which occasion, the Gentleman,
 I at first met with, drop'd this charitable expression,
 "That he hoped, if I knew that Author's designs, I
 "would not be for them." To which my reply was
 to this effect, I did not pretend to that knowledge, nor
 was it needful to the Inquiry I had made. What the
 Archdeacon after published of this matter, may be found
 in his *Preface* to his *Dialogue between Demas and Hie-
 rarchy, in Answer to the Rights*. My name and place
 was conceal'd in that publication, with a profession of
 tenderness to me in it. But sufficient care had been

long before taken to make my name publick enough all over this County, and beyond it, as branded with a report of my declaration in favour of Devil-worship. And that was the thing talked of as what the Archdeacon would publish; tho' he did not do me that wrong. But if he had, the circumstances would not have allow'd me an appeal to any other Witnesses on my behalf, than God, and Conscience, my own, and theirs, who were not of my company, and either did me the wrong, or were, so far as I know, silent Witnesses to it. I exchanged some Letters with the Author, upon the occasion of what he had published. He civilly encouraged me to write to him, by "professing a readiness to give me all christian satisfaction, if I thought he had in any wise wronged me:" But when I had written, he at length insisted on my printing my Letter, as the condition of his answering to what I had alledged in it: which I did not think needful, till he had printed his which occasioned it; and so the matter ended. But the clamour was revived many years after: tho' not by the Archdeacon himself. My Principles about Conscience were the same then, as now: nor did I say any thing in that conversation, which was not agreeable to what I have said here under *Principle VII.* to the purpose of which was my Letter to that *GENT.* on the subject, a Copy of which I have still by me.

NOTWITHSTANDING this treatment from Men of zeal for the Church, I still retain the same respect and deference I then express'd for those members of it, which are its ornament and glory, and the opinion, that there are as great and good Men of that Communion, as any in the world. And it was indeed from the mention I made of the then Bishop of *Sarum* with due honour, and particularly with regard to his Moderate Principles, that that *Gentleman*, who first singly and alone engaged me in discourse, took occasion to say, "I hate these Moderate Men, and I hate Moderation;" (which last he seem'd to recall or explain, by saying something I did not understand) and to report afterwards when we overtook the Company, that I had vilify'd, or at least, spoken meanly of another Prelate, of whom I had not really said one word. Posterity will, I hope, be as forward to do justice to one who now fills and adorns the like High Station in the Church, as his adversaries

versaries have been unable to resist the wisdom and spirit, with which he has so gloriously appeared in defence of the common Rights of Men and Christians, and of truly noble, generous and catholic Principles, in all their just Consequences. However that be, I must needs say, that what he and others of that Communion have done from the Pulpit, the Press, and by their Examples, to retrieve the honour of our holy Religion, must leave those inexcusable, that shall for the sake of some, or the far greater part, who may be a scandal to it, pass their censures on the Whole Body. Had any Dissenter in my hearing argued, That a member of that Church could not be saved, because they had no Ministry, and by consequence no Baptism, for want of Presbyterian Ordination, I should have as much exposed myself to him by a contradiction, as I did to those with whom I had to do, as above; tho' still keeping my temper, and without the least consciousness of an indecent Warmth.

I also look upon it as a piece of justice, not to take occasion from the Conduct of *some Dissenters*, to reflect on that *Protestant Body*; which, I hope, is as well furnished with wise, and in all respects worthy members, in proportion to their number, as any other Body of Christians whatever. In short, there are of This, and the contrary Character, belonging to one Denomination as well as to the other. We are therefore all concerned to distinguish people according to their proper and real Characters, and not according to the particular Profession which they severally make; or the opinion, or way of worship they maintain.

THE censured parts of my Conduct amongst the Dissenters, are these: I lent Mr *Emlyn's* Book on the present Controversy, to a Gentleman at the *Bar*; I have quitted some received notions, in which I was educated; I have in the exercise of my Ministry suggested things manifestly clashing, and inconsistent with such notions; And finally, I have owned Mr. *Hubert Stogdon*, though he went under an ill name in point of opinion, as a Christian Brother and Minister of the Gospel; lent for him out of *Devonshire* into this County, entertained him at my house, and was concerned in his Ordination.

I own these facts, and think it easy to justify them from the Principles, which I have owned as Rational
K 2
and

and Christian. And I also own myself to be under the force of a persuasion, that for such Principles, and such Practises in conformity to them, *My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.*

1. As for the Loan of Mr. *Emlyn's* Book; a thing of that nature may be justified from several of those Principles, insisted on, *viz. Numb. vii, ix, x, xii, xiv.* which shew the vast importance of impartial Inquiries after Truth, for the sake of duty; oblige us to take nothing upon trust from any, which we can ourselves examine; and to do the best we can to acquaint ourselves, what is the question in debate, what is granted on both sides, and affirmed or denied, and alledged as evidence, on each side, before we determine so much as for ourselves; and to be governed by protestant Principles, whilst we retain them, in all cases whatever. But as the case was, That of *Numb. xi.* would afford me a sufficient Defence; since it obliges me to take all fit occasions and opportunities given me, in the best manner I can, to discountenance what I think to be an unchristian temper, and practice. What occasion I had to lend that book, will appear from a Letter, the copy of which I shall here insert, written to a Minister, who had long been my Friend, and to other obligations added that of the following passage in the close of one of his, *viz. "I*
Level? " *was sorry to hear something last week in Barb from*
 " *my Lady L——, and wish to see you when your*
 " *own affairs bring you this way."* The friend who brought me that Letter, told me, That he who sent it, had in conversation signified to him an apprehension which he had, that I might, for what I had done, suffer loss as to friends and interest. I knew before what reports had been, and the resentment of the Lady referred to, and had waited on her on that occasion. The other part of the Letter was on a subject quite foreign to that of this, which was as follows;

" As for my Lady, I am not convinced, 'twas a
 " Crime to lend a book to do justice to my self, and
 " the Author, whatever his opinions be. A Gentle-
 " man, of *North-Britain*, (whom I had never seen before)
 " Mr. M——r present, interpreted it to be rudeness
 " in me, and as giving him the lye, when I contra-
 " dicted an assertion of his, as from his personal know-
 " ledge, *viz. That that Author denied our Saviour*
 " *had*

" had a Being before His conception. Accidentally light-
 " ing on the book the day before that on which I was
 " to go to Bath, I carry'd and left it there. Having
 " done so, B——se's, which I bought in sheets, had fol-
 " lowed, but that, intending to send it to the book-
 " binder, I found it defective. I see no danger in read-
 " ing both sides of a question; tho' the truth can be
 " but on one. 'Tis too evident there may be a great deal
 " in having but One Ear. We may prove all things;
 " and yet hold fast that which is good. I am neither an
 " Arian, nor Athanasian. I take neither Emlyn, nor
 " Boyse, for the Master of my Faith. I could not
 " give unfeigned assent to all in either of their books;
 " and yet have read them both all over, and may do
 " it again. I can scarce recollect any thing that my
 " Lady said to me in discourse, when last at Bath, in
 " which any opinion of mine was concern'd: of which I
 " expect an opportunity to make Her Ladyship sensible.
 " Emlyn's sett of notions are not mine: And yet I be-
 " lieve, there is some Truth in his book. And what I
 " mean, I find as clearly express'd by Clark the Exposit-
 " tor, Thomas Vincent, &c. as by him. And I could here
 " mention her Ladyship's own words to the same purpose.
 " But all that would be nothing to Me, if I did not
 " find it as clearly express'd by CHRIST Himself, and
 " His Apostles. I take the BIBLE for my only Rule.
 " I believe the Great Prophet in whatever I can be
 " convinced He says to me; and am concerned se-
 " riously and impartially to search after the sence of
 " His Revelations. I value no Truth, but for the
 " sake of Duty. I think myself as far from Infallibi-
 " lity, as my neighbours; abhor the very thought of
 " confining my Charity to those who understand the
 " Scripture just as I do, and denying it to others, tho'
 " their conversation be with such sincerity towards God
 " and Man, as becomes the Gospel. I am of the
 " mind of Locke and Howe, in this, That mistakes of
 " great importance in their nature, may be very inno-
 " cent in minds honestly (I mean, as they, piously) dis-
 " posed. I believe, that every private Man has a right,
 " and is bound, to search the Scriptures, and judge
 " for himself; and is not bound to consult one sett of
 " Expositors only, how much soever they may really
 " have of Truth. I contend for no Faith, but as it
 " works

" *work of Love*, purifies the heart and regulates the Life.
 " And therefore they, who attend my Ministry, never
 " do, and (by the Grace of God) never shall, hear
 " any discourses from Me, but practical. These are my
 " Principles, and Conduct; which I am free to own,
 " not only to You my Friend, and my Lady, who has
 " been so, but to all the world. I have more Friends than
 " I deserve, tho' not more than are desirable. They are
 " very good: but a Good God, and a Good Conscience,
 " are far better. If I keep them, I will keep them fair-
 " ly: I will impose upon none of them: no, not on
 " those, whom I most value, and on whom I most de-
 " pend. If any, or all of them, should on the knowledge
 " of this, judge me unworthy of the continuance of
 " their favour; I have counted the Cost, and hope I
 " shall be enabled to bear it as becomes a Christian.
 " And tho' they are dead to Me, as Friends, I shall in
 " the way of Duty expect them again by a Resurrecti-
 " on, in the Regions of clearest Light, and warmest
 " Love, where, I believe, we shall be much more
 " sensible of the imperfections of our then raised Un-
 " derstandings, than we are now willing to be of what
 " attends the little narrow ones possess'd by us at pre-
 " sent. Then we shall know, how much we once groped,
 " and wrangled in the Dark, and what mixtures of
 " Hell-Blind zeal had laid in our Way to HEAVEN.
 " I have always had, and still have very honourable
 " Thoughts of my Lady: tho' the report she made you
 " has been the occasion of this freedom in speaking my
 " mind, by means of your own report, with which you
 " was pleased to OBLIGE me. This freedom needs no
 " Apology; and should I make one for tediousness, it
 " would but increase the fault. I therefore conclude,
 " Dear Sir, your obliged, and affectionate,

I am, Sir,
 Sept. 1716.

N. BILLINGSLEY,

THE consequence of my sending this letter, was a
 misunderstanding between me and the friend, to whom
 I sent it. In others, which were exchanged for what
 I received, I had regard to such Principles as I had
 before declared for in the *Ordination Sermon*
 which I have more than once referred to as published
 afterwards.

afterwards; and such as have here been distinctly considered. I had all the reason in the world to think (as I professed to do) that the report, as made to me; and as I understood it, was indeed obliging. But what the Reader is now to judge of, was disgusting, and appear'd to my friend as expressions of warmth and transports which he did not like. I shall only say, That what I had heard from him and others, made me count the cost of steadiness to my rational and christian Principles. I expected a storm, and was preparing for it; and therefore I wrote as one forming vigorous Resolutions (by the help of God) to act with Conscience and Honour, whatever sufferings it might expose me to.

It was at this juncture, and upon this occasion, so far as I know, that I began to be branded as an *Arian*. It was then, at least, that I began to hear of it with both ears, from *Bristol*, as well as the *Bath*. And I was also informed, what was written of me to a place at a much greater distance. On what Design it was, another might know better than I.

2. As to my quitting some received notions, in which I myself was educared, and publickly suggesting what was inconsistent with them; I think this also may be justified from the Principles, which I have made my Rules; viz. (besides those I have referred to under the former head,) from the XVth, which is, *That I must change my Principles, when such evidence is offered to me, as needs only impartial consideration, to make it sufficient for my conviction that I was mistaken in them*; and from the XIIIth; viz. *That I must in the exercise of my Ministry, endeavour by all proper means to serve the great design of it, which is, to make Men wise, and good, and happy.*

AND for the more particular defence of myself against Censures of this kind, I shall here say no other things, than I said a year ago, to many of my Hearers assembled at my request, Sept. 29. 1719. the Rev. Mr. Matthew Towgood of *Shepton Mallet*, being also present. Nor was it my fault, if any were absent that were concerned to be there. The Discourse with which I began the Conference at that time, as transcribed from the notes of one who in short-hand wrote after me, was,

"None of you can (I presume) be wholly ignorant of the occasion of this Meeting, and I hope, I have nothing
" in

in view, but what is just and honourable, and becoming my character, both as a Christian, and a Minister; and that by the help of God, *whose I am, and whom I serve*, the part I shall act in it will be answerable.

By His Providence, He placed me here above twenty years ago. I am very sensible, that many weaknesses and imperfections, neglects and failures have attended me in the discharge of my Duty towards God, your souls, and my own: so that I greatly need *the forgiveness that is with Him*, for which I hope, through the Merits of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. But this I can truly say, *my Conscience bearing me witness*, I have endeavoured to walk in all good Conscience towards God, and you; that *having received this Glorious Ministry*, and such opportunity for the Exercise of it, *I have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, have not walked in craftiness, nor handled the word of God deceitfully*; but have study'd, according to the best of my apprehensions, by *manifestation of the Truth, to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God*. I have searched the Scriptures, which alone are to be respected as Divine Oracles. I have abhorred, and hope I ever shall abhor the popish Doctrine, That we should take Truth upon trust, and believe as the Church believes. I have not called any man Master on earth; tho' I have a just veneration for eminent Persons gone before me. I have not acted by the Principle, whereby I must be a Pagan in a pagan Country, and a Papist in a popish Country; but as a Protestant have pleaded for the search of the Scriptures. I have beg'd for Divine Assistance, have not been byass'd by any Corruption, have been open to Conviction, and willing to know the Truth, and valu'd it for practical purposes. I have made it my business to lay before you what I was convinced was important Truth in a practical and affectionate manner. I hope I have the Testimony of your Consciences; and think the words I have spoken will rise against you in Judgment another Day, if you are not the better for them: I have not study'd to spare myself, but to promote the true Interests of Religion, and practical Godliness, and to press Men to sober, righteous, and godly lives. I have earnestly recommended to you Love to all who bear the Image of CHRIST, tho' of different Apprehensions, and I hope, I have set such an Example before you. I can truly say,
That

" I value Truth for the sake of Duty,
 " so I value Men for their Conformity to the Divine
 " Law, and have grieved for a bitter and censorious
 " Spirit, wherever I found it; have endeavoured to
 " make you sensible what an Obligation lies on all
 " to mutual Charity. I have suffer'd in my Repu-
 " tation for doing as I would be done by, for acting
 " according to the Principles I have publicly pro-
 " fess'd; I am sensible I am liable to mistake. You
 " may know (after all the Searches I have made)
 " what I am ignorant of: but I think it reasonable
 " you should be as ready to bear with the Infirmary
 " of my Understanding, as I am with yours. I have
 " not kept back from you any thing I thought prof-
 " itable, and necessary, but have endeavoured to
 " offer it in such a way, that I might not give occa-
 " sion for Contention; have avoided such Terms as
 " are made the Shibboleth of a Party. I know of
 " nothing I look upon as Truth, but what I find in
 " the Holy Scripture express'd as clearly, and plainly,
 " as I can possibly express it in any other Words
 " whatever: and if things are not so express'd, I
 " can't think of the Importance of them so great.
 " Whatever my Conduct has been, I must say, I hope
 " I have endeavour'd in *Simplicity and Godly Sincerity*,
 " to have my *Conversation in the World*. I will be
 " yielding to Conviction, as to Mistakes in Judgment
 " or Practices; and therefore have chang'd Methods
 " in preaching, whenever it appear'd most agreeable
 " to the People. 'Tis known, that some, nearly rela-
 " ted to me by Marriage, have their Affections much
 " alienated from me: I have lived in a good Corre-
 " spondence with them; and should still, had it not
 " been for one, whom I have call'd an Incendiary.
 " I have desir'd a Meeting; thought it reasonable
 " there should be one, when several have deserted
 " me; and think it highly reasonable, that what has
 " been said behind my back, should now be said to
 " my face. — If I have said, or done amiss, I shall be
 " yielding to Conviction."
 " Whatever unguarded Expression there may be,
 " which I did not think fit now to alter, I would
 " have understood with Limitation to the Subject.
 " Most, if not all of this, is applicable to my pre-
 " vious and former Faults. K
 " I am, Sir, your Obedient Servant

sent Purpose; but not so particularly, and expressly, as what I said at the same time upon the occasion of a Letter then received from an old Friend, and near Relation, who had now left my Ministry; the principal Passages of which were as follows:

“THE Reason why we chang’d our Minister, is, because you have chang’d your Principles; for, in the first place, I heard you say, you was bred up in the Calvin Doctrine, and that you adher’d to that for some time, until, I think, your superfluous Studies did change your Judgment: then you fell into *Arianism*; and now you are turn’d downright *Arian*; and I know not where such Studies as this may end, unless it be in downright *Papery*: so that now, if we continue to attend your Ministry, we have not that Reason to give, as the sober Church of England’s Auditory have for hearing some of their debauch’d Ministers, namely, that they ought to do as they say, and not as they do: but rather, I think, we ought to do the contrary to them; that is, to do as you do, and not as you sometimes say, and as you believe.”

THIS is a Copy, word for word, the not Letter for Letter, some Words happening to be spelt wrong, as *Arridh* for *Arian*, *Poppery* for *Popery*, &c. In what is omitted, he only blamed me for so often requesting him, and others concern’d, (*viz.* his Brother and their Wives) to give me a publick Meeting, and the Reason why they absented themselves from my Ministry; profess’d civil Respect to me, and said that he hop’d he should be never unmindful of the many Obligations which he acknowledged I had laid him under of Love and Gratitude; but be ready to require my Kindness, and to serve me in any common Affair belonging to this World, as well as answer any reasonable Demand.

THE Account I then publicly gave of the Change I own’d as to Calvinistical Principles, was as here follows, transcrib’d also from the Notes of another, since I neither had, nor cou’d have any of my own. I depend on the Reader’s Candor as to Unaccuracies; some of which I myself have observ’d, without correcting them. He is not to expect a studied Discourse; especially since there was no opportunity for any thing of that nature; but to consider me as giving him a relation of certain Facts, which cannot but sensibly affect

affect me whenever I think or speak of them, without the Help, or much Need of Art.

"I HAD a Mother who took more than ordinary
 "care in our Education, and to instil into us a lively
 "Sense of the Divine Goodness; particularly, from
 "the Works of Creation and Providence. By this
 "means, when very young, but a very few Years
 "old, I had a very high Veneration for good Men,
 "and a very great Concern for my own Happiness,
 "and Repentance as necessary in order to it. But
 "my Mother told me some things with relation to
 "the Decrees of God, and to Infants as Children
 "and Objects of his Wrath, liable to the Eternal
 "Damnation of Hell for *Adam's Sin*, and the Cor-
 "ruption of Nature, an unavoidable Consequence of
 "it. It was suggested to me, that I and others were
 "guilty of that Sin; and therefore liable to so dread-
 "ful a Punishment for it: this made me think that I
 "must repent of *Adam's Sin* first, which was first;
 "and that if I began with repenting of my own Sins,
 "or those I had myself committed, I should begin at
 "the wrong End: I therefore set myself, by the
 "help of Bishop *Usher's* Body of Divinity, to consider
 "the Aggravations of that first Sin, and how far I
 "was concerned in it. As to the first, I had Satis-
 "faction that it was a very heinous Sin: but when I
 "came to consider my own Concern in it, I could not
 "be at all satisfied: I did not commit it; or contri-
 "bute to it: It was thousands of Years before I was
 "born: It was never in my power to prevent it.
 "THIS led me to other thoughts of God than I had
 "before, and discouraged me in Religion. I could
 "not then persuade myself that God was so Good,
 "so LOVELY a BEING, as he had been represented.
 "Now I could scarce maintain a good Thought of so
 "glorious a PERSON, who never deserv'd a hard one.
 "In His Word he had profess'd the most compassio-
 "nate Concern for the Welfare of his Creatures:
 "and I read a Sermon on that Text, *O that they were*
 "*wise*, &c. the Design of which was to shew from
 "the Scriptures his great Willingness that all should be
 "saved: but I read it with a Notion that He himself
 "had absolutely decreed, that the greater part shou'd
 "be damn'd. And this made me consider the Decla-

"rations of Scripture, which were urg'd, as decisive.
 "I thereupon asked my Mother how these things
 "could be reconciled; she told me, there was in
 "God a secret and revealed Will: but this Talk of
 "a revealed Will, and a secret contrary to it, made
 "me think of a Lye, against which I had been so
 "often warn'd, and for which fault she never fail'd
 "of correcting us when guilty.
 "This Objection against the Truth and Goodness
 "of God, dash'd the most hopeful Beginnings of an
 "early Piety, and led me to blasphemous Thoughts;
 "which I so far entertained, as to conclude, upon
 "Reflection, that I had been guilty of the Sin against
 "the Holy Ghost. This Conclusion was a conside-
 "rable time after the Difficulty first arose in my
 "Mind, to my great Prejudice; and it was when, at
 "about twelve Years old, I lived with my Brother,
 "who was my Master, near the Bath. Upon this
 "melancholy occasion I left my play, and retired
 "into Corners to weep, till my Brother surprized me
 "drench'd in Tears, and would not leave me till I
 "told him what it was which troubled me: he satis-
 "fied me that my Case was not as I supposed, be-
 "cause I had so much Concern about it; but I did
 "not tell him, what had led me to those blasphemous
 "Thoughts, nor any one else, till a few Years
 "ago, when Mr. N. engag'd me in the Controversy,
 "to whom I then gave a particular Account of it.
 "As I grew up, I met with a little Book entitled,
 "A VINDICATION of the GOODNESS of God; written
 "by Mr. Baxter; which, for the Benefit I received
 "from it, I had reason to value above Mountains of
 "Gold: which I after (tho very loth) parted with
 "to my Brother in his Melancholy, with the Thought
 "that I wou'd not have parted with it to any one
 "else. The Design of it was to shew, that these
 "black Thoughts of God proceeded from a wrong
 "way of arguing, viz. *Web: A Doctrine is true, and*
 "therefore it can't be true that God is good: whereas
 "we should argue thus, *God is good, (which Truth he*
 "sat in the clearest light) *and therefore, whatever*
 "Doctrine is really inconsistent with his Goodness, must
 "needs be false. This, I bless God, did the great
 "Service, giving me a Turn in favour of Religion.

WHEN the time drew on for my taking on me the
 Ministry, I consider'd it as plainly reveal'd, that
 Infants are Children of Wrath, and liable to the
 Damnation of Hell; tho' now the contrary is as
 manifest as can be to me. But then I thus resolv'd
 the Difficulty; Tho' I cannot reconcile this with the
 Justice and Goodness of God, yet the Consistency will
 appear by the Light of the Last Day. I therefore
 preach'd on Ephes. ii. 3. — *And were by Nature Chil-*
dren of Wrath; and, as I thought myself oblig'd,
 laid before the People the monstrous Doctrine, re-
 ferring them to that future Judgment, for a Disco-
 very how to reconcile it to the Notion of the BENE-
 VOLENCE of BEINGS, and telling them, that it was now their
 Duty to believe, that it was really true and consistent
 with it. Mr. Payne, then one of the Congregation,
 till he removed to Beckington, much wiser than
 myself, desired me not to talk so of Children. I
 then thought him a Heretick, and that I had the
 more need to insist on such Subjects, tho' I after
 learn'd to think him an excellent Man; and then
 he told me, that the Principles I now have, were cal-
 culated to lead Men to Holiness. But still I was what
 they call a Calvinist, as to the Doctrine of Election,
 or a Baxterian; till my Opinion was changed upon
 the following Occasion:

HEARING something said very harsh, as to the
 Salvation of those who denied that Doctrine, in
 company which I justly valued, I contradicted it;
 for which some Reflections were afterwards pass'd
 upon me. I thereupon took a Resolution, which I
 immediately set myself to execute. I searched the
 BIBLE, without the Help of Books, from the
 Beginning to the End; and did thereupon change
 some Apprehensions I had before. I found that
 Election, in the Old Testament, was apply'd to the
 whole Jewish Nation, and in the New Testament to
 Christian Nations and Churches; since the Apo-
 stles, being Jews, and owning the Authority of the
 Scriptures of the Old Testament, must be suppo-
 sed to speak the Language of both. I shall instance
 in one Text only; *According as he hath chosen us in*
himself, that we might be holy: Chosen in Christ; that is,
chosen in respect of his merit, and not in respect of our
own merit.

as I understand it, put under a Gospel-Dispensation, that we might be holy. It seem'd plain, that the Design was to lead us to value our Christian Privileges, and improve them in order to Holiness, without which they would do us no service.

Now to apply all; Before the above-mention'd Discourse, and till I had examin'd the Scriptures, I did believe certain Doctrines, which I could not after Examination. I had nothing of Interest or corrupt Affection to byass me. What could move me to such Impartiality in my Enquiries, but a sincere Desire of knowing the Will of God? I have had no other View in the publick Exercise of my Ministry, but to lead People to Religion; have thought, and still think, many might be under the Difficulties and Discouragements I was under (tho' they might conceal them, as I did) by such Doctrines as, in my opinion, tend to lead People to Blasphemy. I must ever (for 'tis a Principle of Conscience) and upon all occasions, tell People of GOD's Goodness, and Willingness of their Happiness.

R---r F---'s Child dying, which was very remarkable, tho' it liv'd but six Years, I preach'd its Funeral Sermon on those words, *Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forb'd them not; for of such is the Kingdom of GOD.* And afterwards on, *Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* I did not deny the Corruption of Nature; but represented our Saviour's Words as having some Meaning in them; consider'd how, and in what respects we ought to become as little Children, viz. in Humility, Contempt of the World, Teachableness, &c. It might be gather'd from my Discourse, that I did not think them hateful to GOD. About that time, as I remember, I baptiz'd my Brother Jer.'s Child in this place. Whether the above-mention'd Subject might lead me to it, I cannot tell; but think it did; however, I upon that occasion endeavour'd to throw off dishonourable Thoughts of GOD. My Sister-in-law has not long ago said, *Thar whilst I was discoursing to that purpose, she had a mind to carry away the Child.* I remember that as to the Text, *Behold I was shapen in Iniquity,*
and

"and in Sin did my Mother conceive me; I said, that
 "whatever was the Meaning of it, that which I put
 "upon it, or any other, what was commonly receiv'd
 "you'd not be so, viz. that Infants who don't know
 "what Sin or Duty mean, or their right hand from
 "their left, are hated of GOD, or liable to Hell.
 "I had no ill Design upon any, or any worse Design
 "than to lead People to the most honourable
 "Thoughts of the Divine Majesty. *Mr. Towgood*
 "Now after what you have heard, judge, whe-
 "ther you ought not to be charitable to me, when,
 "as Occasion serves, I offer you Discourses of that
 "nature."

"As to my being turn'd downright *Arian*, I denied
 the Fact. A Minister, whom I shall soon have occa-
 sion to mention, being present, took this opportunity
 to clear himself from a Report, which he thought
 injurious, and which was grounded on what he had
 said in Conversation to Mr. Towgood, misunderstood by
 some Person or other in the Company, or within hear-
 ing. I repeat his words, because, abstracted from
 what was personal, they are fully expressive of my
 Sense, as well as his own.

"HEARING that Mr. Towgood reported I was an
 "*Arian*, I went to him, and told him, *I was not an Arian*:
 "I am not come to tell what I am, but what I am not, &c.
 "If any ask me, What my Opinions are, I am at li-
 "berty to tell them, or not; but ought not to tell
 "what is false. I am not of *Arian's* peculiar Princi-
 "ples; but if I were, I could not say I was an *Arian*,
 "unless I blot a Text out of my Bible: for that
 "would be the same as to say, CHRIST is not my
 "Master, but *Arian*. If I did believe *Arian's* peculiar
 "Doctrines, it would be purely accidental; and I
 "cannot be an *Arian*, unless I renounce Christianity."

"AFTER my first and general Application to the
 People then assembled, I several times express'd my
 Desire, that if any had any thing to object against
 me, they would then object it; assuring them, that I
 shou'd not take that amiss, and was seconded by
 Mr. William Browne of *Astweek*, (a Gentleman related,
 and well known to the Reverend Mr. Simon Browne of
 London, and my constant Hearer) in the following
 Terms: "If any of the Congregation, of which
 "Mr.

"Mr. *Billing* & his Minister, are dissatisfied, they ought
 to give an account of their Dissatisfaction;
 & if they have any thing to say for themselves. It
 was not design'd that Mr. *Billing* should accuse him-
 self. Has no one any thing to say?" Upon my
 saying, "I desire all may be said to me, which has
 been said against me;" And a few other things inter-
 posed, he thus applied himself to me: "Those that
 like your Ministry very well, are willing to know
 what is said against your Conduct in the Pulpit," or
 "out of it." And then to the People, "If nothing
 is said to his charge, 'twill be very unjust, after the
 Separation of this Assembly, to say any thing a-
 gainst him, 'twill be very barbarous." Upon the De-
 livery of the above-mention'd Letter, which was from
 my eldest Brother-in-law, I ask'd whether that con-
 tain'd all they had to charge me with, and was answer'd
 by his Wife, who deliver'd it, "This is our Mind." 'Twas
 then ask'd, whether any present wou'd support it. Upon
 the Receipt of a Letter from Mr. *W. J.* another Bro-
 ther, which also contain'd no Charge but with relation
 to Principles, as maintain'd by me in opposition to
 others, and that only in general; I again ask'd, *Have*
you any thing more? and was also answer'd by his Wife,
 who deliver'd this, *This is our Mind.* I then said, "I
 desire All to speak that have any thing else to say;
 & the rather, because 'twas hinted by my Brother
H. J. that nine parts in ten of the Congregation were
 prejudic'd against me. If so, I desire they will
 speak; or 'tis not Justice. I wou'd not lose the Af-
 fections of the People; for then I am not likely to
 be useful to them. If I have, 'tis reasonable I
 shou'd know the Facts, and Grounds. I shall not
 make it mine of any; tho' I must their deserting,
 and traducing me, and speaking behind my back,
 and acting an antichristian part in endeavouring to
 raise People's Prejudices against me, without saying
 any thing to me, I have endeavour'd not to forfeit
 the Affections of the People; have not lost them
 by violating Conscience; and shall not endeavour
 to regain them by violating it."

As no Member of the Church under my Care
 objected any thing to me, either as a fresh Charge, or
 in support of that of the Letter; so there was but one
 who

who did so, that had ever been of the number of my stated Hearers. And I shall here set down all he said to that purpose, as follows:

" I HAVE nothing to say against you as to your Life, but cannot acquiesce in your Principles. A Question was propos'd about two years and an half ago, about the *communicable and incommunicable Attributes*. Mr. Browne persuaded you, it was too high a Stile: then you put it forth, *Whether it was possible for GOD to communicate a Being under him, and over us?* I was absent that Summer, and so did not know how the Progress of the Conference went on. Two Years ago, the Question was upon the Point of Justification: *W—m W—ks* said as the Assembly; you said there was no such thing as Imputation from Adam, or Christ; that believing in the LORD was imputed for Righteousness. You compar'd it to an Affize, and said he was innocent that perform'd the Terms: if you perform the Terms of the Covenant, you are justified. Now of late your Preaching, seemingly, is—— [he did not say what] I cannot particularly remember; but some time ago, preaching on the Words of [in] *John, As thou hast given him Power over all Flesh, &c.* The first Sermon on the former part of the Verse was *Arianism*: I was at *Shepton* in the Afternoon. [*Qu.* What do you call *Arianism*?] I call that, in those who don't hold that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are One GOD: You said GOD of GOD. In another Sermon on *Paul's* Words to *Timothy*, Be not a Partaker of other Men's Sins, you prov'd how far one might be Partaker of other Men's Sins, and said that *Adam* finned for himself."

As here is mention made of Questions, and a Conference, I shall give some account of a Custom amongst us. This Conference has been weekly, after a Repetition, on Lord's-day Evenings, (tho not without Interruptions,) for a Course of seventeen Years: So long ago I began it, encourag'd by an Example of the like Practice at *Whitchurch* in *Hampshire*, and the Assurance which had been given me by my dear and worthy Brother, Mr. *Richard Billingsley*, Minister of the Dissenting Congregation there, but then lately deceas'd, and by those who surviv'd him, of the great Success it had,

had, in concurrence with other Means, to promote Knowledge, Reformation of Manners, and an early Piety. The Question propos'd a Week before is consider'd; and then another is propos'd, unless the further Consideration of the same be referr'd to the next. I usually propose it with regard to a Connection of Subjects, but so as to encourage those present to object against it, and propose one themselves; and I don't know of any one so propos'd, publicly or privately, which I did not explain, (if I thought there was need of it) and recommend to this stated and useful Assembly of the People filling my House. We began with preparatory Questions; and then consider'd the Being, and Attributes of God; the Foundations, and Branches, both of Natural and Revealed Religion. The Design, Tendency, and Management, has been all practical: It has been my Care to have the Nature, and true State of the Question well understood; and that what was said about it, might be, as much as possible, in the way of a free and familiar Conversation, and offering mutual Assistance in the Search of Truth, *and provoking one another to Love, and to good Works.* I first hear what any one says, and say of that what I think proper: if it be impertinent, (of which Instances at first were common) I say so, and why, in the softest Terms: if it be to the purpose, tho' not directly, I accordingly take notice of it, and improve it so far as the Matter will bear. When one thing has been consider'd, I hear another, &c. and I afterwards offer what I think has been omitted: and if I apprehend that they have not well employ'd their own Thoughts, I desire that they will on the same Subject against the next time; willing to have the Matter set in as clear and just a Light as may be, I encourage the starting Difficulties and Objections. Tho' the whole is practical, and I am studious immediately to apply every Particular to Consciences and Affections, I sometimes conclude with an Inference or two, or an Exhortation. My Discourses are not premeditated, but such as a Man may have when freely conversing with his Friends, and earnestly desiring that the Conversation may be profitable to himself and them. From long Experience, I now (by the way) recommend a thing of this nature, as an excellent
Means

Means to revive the languishing Interests of our Holy Religion; which, in Towns, may be used with much greater Advantage, than where I live.

I WAS not charged with saying any thing in answer to the two Questions, the Proposal of which, two Years and an half before I heard again of them, I did not remember: Questions in which nothing is affirm'd or deny'd, so much as implicitly, can't be ill Principles; nor can the Proposal of them to others, to consider, and answer them as they think fit, be teaching false Doctrine. It is not said, that the Question about the Attributes was propos'd by Me; and I am assured that Mr. Browne, and not I, propos'd it; who, when it should have been answer'd, spoke for its being laid aside; as it was since there was a Silence: and one (but not the Person who now objects against my Principles) profess'd a Dislike of it, which I now remember, and that I then wonder'd at it, not satisfy'd with the Reason Mr. B. guess'd at, because I thought it had been made appear as intelligible and practical to them; and that much might be said on the Subject that was plain and important. At length I understand the true Reason from my Friend himself, who, in the Conference, profess'd the Dislike; which was this: A certain Person, upon hearing that this Question had been propos'd, did, in conversation with him, ascribe it to a Design of promoting *Arianism*; of which, I dare say, Mr. B. was not in the least conscious. This, however, made my Informer so willing to have nothing said to it. My Conduct, in this Matter, was only encouraging the Consideration of a Question, propos'd according to Custom. As for the Question, which 'tis said I put instead of the former, *viz. Whether it was possible for GOD to communicate a Being under HIM, and over us?* neither I, nor my Friends, can yet remember it. I might say something, which one so understood, and easily forget it in so long a time. As I know my own way of thinking, I cannot doubt, but that, whatever I said on such a Subject, was to convey rais'd Apprehensions of the MOST HIGH: and I esteem it more suitable to the Veneration that such Worms as we are, owe to that God the Father Almighty, to say, He CAN communicate a Being as present every where, in this poor little Spot of Earth

on which we crawl, and ten thousand other Worlds, as our Souls are in our Bodies, and capable of governing them all, and their various Inhabitants, according to their several Natures, by His Order; than it is to say, He CANNOT do it. 'Tis true, we cannot tell how he can do it; nor can we tell how he communicates the Being of a Fly, or a Mite. * *Canst thou by searching find out GOD? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection?* It would, indeed, be absurd enough, to apply this to a plain Contradiction, and say, that this One God Almighty can make another God Almighty; or make another to be Himself, or equal in Power and Glory with Himself: i. e. make a derived, and absolutely dependent Being, to be underiv'd, self-existent, and independent; and one who has nothing which he has not received, as Blessed, as one who can receive nothing, gives all that is given, and can take away whatever He has given, whenever he pleases.

I N my Sermon on Tim. v. 22. two Years before the Exception was made to me, being to shew what it was to be *Partakers of other Men's Sins*, I said, "This is not to be understood strictly, and properly, as if their Sins could become ours: no, in such a Sense, Their Sins can no more become Our Sins, than Their Actions can become Our Actions, or Their Thoughts Our Thoughts. Different Persons cannot have the same individual Sins; tho their Sins may be of the same Sort, or Kind; that is, they may be alike. It must be our own irregular Thoughts, Words, and Actions, that must be our own Sins: another Man's cannot be so; and therefore the Sin of our First Parent, is never called, *the Offence of many*, but *the Offence of one Man*, Rom. v. 15-19. We have no where in Scripture the least hint, that any of his Posterity will ever be called to account for it. Since therefore, in this Sense, no Man can be *Partaker of other Men's Sins*, we must enquire after some other."

And, as I conceive, Christ's Righteousness can be no more ours, in a strict and proper Sense, than Adam's Sin. If we perform the Terms of the Gospel-Covenant, tho we are not innocent or sinless, we shall be justify'd at the Great Assize, and accepted as righteous

* Job. xi. 7.

through

through the Righteousness and Obedience of Christ. If the Assembly meant more than this, I understand, and believe no more: nor this at all the more, because they understood, and believ'd it. As good Protestants, they asserted the Scripture to be the only Rule, without pretending to be authoritative or infallible Interpreters of it. Their Catechism is good: I pay it, and them, all due Respect; but I assert my liberty to think and say, that it is not without its Marks of Human Imperfection; and protest against idolizing it, or setting it upon a level with the Standard of our Holy Religion: as in effect they do, who judge of Doctrines and Men, as they agree, or disagree with it. A Gentleman, whose Orthodoxy has (I dare say) never been suspected, long ago observ'd to me, that those worthy Persons did not seem to have well consider'd, that their Work was for the Instruction of Children. He then favour'd me with the sight of a short, but valuable Composure of his own, design'd as a Remedy against that Inconvenience; which I requested him to publish, as he did afterwards with this Title, *The Beginner's Catechism*. And I appeal to any one who shall consider it, Whether the Answers of the Assembly to their 6th and 7th Questions, are in Words easy to be understood by Children; who yet, if they can speak plainly, may repeat the Sound of them as well as their Parents. This Catechism contains *the Substance of the Christian Religion*, for which I value it: but I should value it more, if it was in *the Words and Phrases of Scripture* judiciously collected, and distinct notice was taken in it of the Perfections of God, and the Regards they severally oblige us to pay him; than which, nothing can be of greater Importance; and yet it is almost universally wanting in Books of this kind, that are not of the larger size. Besides that which I have used for many Years past, printed in Two Sheets, by J. D. in 1693, and sold by Mr. Jonathan Robinson in St. Paul's Church-yard; and Mr. Sam. Crouch, in Pope's-head Alley, Cornhill; I never saw but one more which had this common Defect supply'd: and both were in their Composition so much alike, that they appear'd to me but as somewhat different Performances of the

✓ same Author, whether Dr. *Fowler*, (as Mr. *Crouch* in-
 form'd me), or any other. 'Tis a nobler Employment,
 and here I confess Ambition, to expound Scripture
 itself, rather than to expound other Men's Expositions
 of it; tho I do not disdain the latter. And I think
 Children are not injured, when excus'd from a double
 Task, by having their Answers and Proofs the same;
 If they are not acquainted with later ways of speaking,
 this need not be much regretted; since the *old*, that I
 mean which was used by Christ and His Apostles, is
 ✓ better. These being my Sentiments, I might chuse to
 say as the Scripture, * that Faith, or believing in the
 Lord, was imputed, or graciously accounted, to us for
 Righteousness; rather than as the Assembly, "That the
 "Righteousness of Christ was imputed to us, and re-
 "ceived by Faith." God's Judgment is according to
 Truth; and therefore he never imputes that to us,
 ✓ which he knows is not ours: as he never imputed our
 Sin to Christ as His, who knew no Sin, tho He made
 Him a Sin-Offering for us. I may tell People what are
 the Doctrines of Men, Brethren, and Fathers; Coun-
 cils and Assemblies, antient and modern Writers;
 but I must not receive, or teach any thing as a Doc-
 trine of God, because they receiv'd, and taught it as
 such; but bring all to the Test of † Scripture, and
 bear (and whoever hath an Ear, let him bear) what
 the Spirit saith unto the Churches. In the Controversy
 about Justification, which a Stranger undertook to
 manage with a Set of Terms, which he had, by Tra-
 ✓ dition, from Modern Antiquity, my late Hearer urged
 against me, that the Prophet says, *Our Righteousness is*
as filthy Rags; which, I told him, was meant of the
 Jewish Nation: as if he had said, That which we so
 much glory in as our Righteousness, our very Obser-
 vances of the Ceremonial Law, is but Hypocrisy and
 Iniquity; not as if Holiness, tho imperfect, was as
 filthy Rags.

As for my preaching *Arianism*; or, as it has been
 express'd, on Arian Texts of Scripture, one of which
 was now mention'd, viz. John xvii. 2. if to that be
 added ver. 1. and *Psal.* xl. 7, 8. these were all I then

* Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6. Jam. ii. 23.
 † Assembly Confession, Chap. I. Sect. 10. Rev. ii. 29.

thought of, after a Search and Review which I had made, whence occasion might be taken for Complaints of this kind. I preach'd but a Lord's-day on each of those Verses in *John* xvii. and one, and no more, on those in *Psal.* xl. and this last was some Years before the Charge. If these Texts are indeed *Arian*, my Sermons, grounded on them, could not well be otherwise. On *Psal.* xl. I observed, "That the glorious Person there speaking, had the Law of His God in his Heart, even before he was Man, as well as after; and in obedience to it, *became* Man, by assuming the *Body prepar'd* for him." And I offer'd the Example of one, so superior to us, as a Motive to yield the most ready Obedience to our heavenly Father's Will in all things. [Since that time, I find, that I had also preach'd Two Lord's-days on *John* v. 9, 10. and in one Sermon consider'd the Son as always the Beloved of his Father, and obedient to him, *viz.* before he was Man, and afterwards.] On *John* xvii. "I consider'd how, according to the Son's Prayer, the Father did glorify the Son, and what Power he gave him; and how the Son, according to the design of his Prayer, did refer all to his Father's Glory. One Inference was, That we should honour the Son as the Father. To this purpose, I quoted *John* v. 22, 23." And here my late Hearer interpos'd these Words, *You offer'd the Example of the Regent and the King.* "Tis true, in that case, People would be bound to honour the Prince in obedience to the King; if they rebel against the Prince, they rebel against the King too: this I said," and exhorted my Christian Hearers to honour and obey the Son of God, in obedience to the Father, who had given him all Power in Heaven and Earth. The profess'd Opinion of one of the judicious People, who thought *this an hard Saying*, and not to be borne with, is, That GOD the Father was, indeed, above his Son, but has made him equal with himself. So that, according to him, there are Two Gods: not one a Supreme God, and the other a Subordinate God; an Absurdity, which the good Man and his Wife abhor the thoughts of; but both equal in Power and Glory: one, *viz.* the Father, most High God of Himself, and from all Eternity; the other, *viz.* the Son, made Most High God in time, by the Father. But be it so;

so; say, if the Father had made the Son God above
 Himself, commanding us to give him greater Honour;
 that, however, must be done in Obedience to the Fa-
 ther, who made such a God of him. "I had also this
 Inference, *That the Father and Son are one*, viz. of
 "one Mind and Design, *verse 2. of the same Chapter*
 "and Prayer, *That they may be one, even as we are one.*
 "There it must be so understood: for many Disci-
 "ples are not one Disciple." And that Text could
 not be pertinently alledg'd by me in any other Sense.
 Upon my saying, to the Person objecting against me,
 as above, "I have now given an exact Account, I
 "think, of what I have deliver'd; to your purpose,
 "an exacter than you yourself could give me:" he
 said, *I own but one God*: (after which he said no more
 but this, that he did not pretend to dispute.) My Re-
 ply was, "Did I ever say, that Jesus Christ was ano-
 "ther Supreme God? I have, indeed, call'd him
 "God: not God the Father Almighty, but God
 "of God; which I explain'd God the Son of God
 "the Father; and justify'd it from *Heb. i. 7, 8.*" Had
 I lived in the fourth Century, and used it after the
 Nicene Creed, in which it is to be found, and which
 was made in opposition to those then called *Arians*, I
 might have pass'd for Orthodox, and none but *Arians*
 would have blam'd me for it. But now, it seems,
 this is *Arianism*, and making many Gods. *Socinians*,
 indeed, deny, that our Saviour was a Person in Being
 before his Conception of the *Virgin*: but others, and at
 least, the principal, Managers of the antient, and late-
 ly reviv'd Controversy, have been agreed in owning,
 that the Son, not as Man only, but before he was
 Man, was a Person subordinate to the Father. Whe-
 ther some are in this consistent with themselves, or
 not, is a Question which I did not think myself con-
 cerned to meddle with. Many, of other Congrega-
 tions, were present at this Assembly, of whom no one
 pretended to charge me with any thing: yet no Person
 was, in the least, abridg'd the liberty of speaking
 civilly, but all manner of Encouragement, given to
 a just Freedom. A Complaint, however, being made
 on an Occasion to me unknown 'till afterwards; I
 said, "There may have been some Interruptions; but
 "I desire any one here now to speak: I shall not at
 "all

"all take it amiss."—Mr. *John Hardy*, then of *Shepton-Mallet*, lately removed to *London*, said after a while, "Here is a profound Silence." It continu'd till, at last, I thought it time to dismiss 'em, and said, "I wish ye all well, and that the End of Hearing may be answer'd; otherwise, all your Talk will not profit you in the Day of Christ. If any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

3. As for my owning Mr. *Stogdon*, as a Christian, and Minister, being his Friend, and concerned, with others, in his Ordination; herein I have but acted in conformity to my Principles, as above, and in the Ordination Sermon; from which may be known what my Conduct must have been, had the Report of his being deny'd an Ordination in *Devon*, been as true as it was false. Division amongst the Ministers there about it, was fear'd; to prevent which, the first part I acted, was propos'd to me as an Expedient, by one who gave me his just Character, afterwards confirm'd by a Testimonial from three Ministers at *Exon*, whose Reputation was then as great as their Claim to it was, and I hope ever will be just. This was sent me in answer to my Letter, and is since printed in the *Western Inquisition*. When this Gentleman was ordained, he was, and had been a whole Year, and upwards, the Minister of a Congregation in my Neighbourhood. I need not say what I think of him, to those who best know him; nor must I to Strangers thus publicly, because he is yet living, and would not be pleased to read, or hear it: but I must do him Justice as to a Report; that he wish'd all the *Old Men's Books*, (*viz.* of Calvinist Divines) were burnt; and said, that if they were in Flames, he would not go out at the door to quench 'em, excepting only two or three History Books, &c. It was told me three quarters of a Year after; (*viz.* when the People were assembled, as above) that I was present, and correcting him, said, *No not all, but nine Parts in ten*. I might say so, tho I could not recollect it: but he denies, and abhors, what he is charged with, and ascribes the Report to a Misunderstanding, which he should presently have removed, had it been thought expedient to give him occasion for it, by a profession of Dislike to him. What he said publicly in his own Defence, when charged, was, "I am sure

" it was contrary to my settled Principles: I had ever
 " declared a very great Veneration for the *Old Di-*
 " *vines*, and you yourself [who accuse me] had fre-
 " quently heard me express so much; particularly,
 " that I thought those whom you meant by the *Old*
 " *Men*, (for the supposed slighting of whom, the po-
 " pular Cry was rais'd against me) were the best for
 " Practical Divinity; [*viz.* Mr. *Allein*, &c. This was not
 " deny'd.] I believe I have read twenty times more of
 " their Works, than of what they call'd the *New Men*;
 " there is scarce a Day, but I allot some time for
 " that very purpose: I have often quoted 'em in Con-
 " versation, as well as in the Pulpit, upon occasion;
 " and it is very unlikely I should say, *I wish'd all the*
 " *Old Men's Books were burnt*, at that very time when
 " I came to complain of, and contradict a Story, that
 " I said I was for burning the Works of one or two
 " of 'em." He profess'd that Design when he desir'd
 me to accompany him. The Occasion taken for the
 first Report, was (as he and another present affirm)
 from what he said of Mr. *Bunyan's* Poetry, *viz.* *That*
the burning it wou'd be no Damage, if People might,
by that means, come better to relish such as Mr. Watts, &c.
 The Drift of his Discourse, and mine, when with him,
 was (as I now remember) to express a value for the
 Sacred Writings; my Father-in-law, who would have
 disliked what was reported, as much as any one, join-
 ing with us in it, if not beginning it, as he lately told
 me he thought he did. I am positive that the Talk
 was of controversial Books, or others, as compar'd
 with the Bible, and no otherwise; and I said, " That
 " a *Pagan*, who never heard of the Glosses of Com-
 " mentators, might, perhaps, at first reading, better
 " understand the Bible, than many amongst us."
 His own account of what he did then say, is, in his
 own Words, as follows; " I said, *That if the best Books*
on both Sides (speaking of the Orthodox and their Ad-
 versaries) *were chosen out, which had been written since*
the Reformation, or, within these hundred (or some con-
siderable number of) Years, the rest might be burnt;
and that if the Books of School-Divinity in particular,
which had done so much Mischief, were in Flames, I
would not go out of the Door to save 'em. And I
 remember, that I also said, (tho I had forgot it
 when

when I first heard the Charge,) that I did not know but, upon the whole, considering what mischief Human Writings had done, as well as what good, it would have been as well for Christians, if they had had no Books left 'em but the Bible, and those which were necessary to witness for it, and for the understanding of it; such as History, Chronology, &c. Hence may appear the ground of the Mistake.

The false and groundless Aspersions cast upon me, are such as these:

I. THAT I preach Controversy; even some who live at no great distance from me, have been made to believe, that I preach little or nothing else: whereas my Discourses have been so universally practical, that I know no need I have to make so much as a single Exception, at least, ever since I was deliver'd from certain Principles, call'd *Calvin's*, and the Bigotry which in me attended 'em, as above. As to the Truth of this, I appeal to the impartial Judgments of all who have heard me occasionally, and to the Body of my stated Hearers, whose number, perhaps, upon the whole, has not of late been less than formerly; the Return of some after I had been heard speaking for myself, and the Addition of others consider'd. I have, no doubt, said what is matter of Controversy: For what is not so with one sort of People or other? I have explain'd Scripture as I myself understood it, and sometimes made choice of Subjects, which some may call *Arianian*, or *Arian*, as above, and been faithful in my Discourses to 'em; the Design and Tendency of which, however, could not but appear practical to those who heard without Prejudice to alter the Case, which has made some hear nothing but Railing in a Plea for Love, against the opposite Fruits of the Flesh; and nothing but Controversy in a Discourse, which they would otherwise have thought the most practical. I have been blamed on this head by a stated Hearer that was practis'd upon, who, when I argued the Matter with him, ingeniously acknowledged, that he should not have had the Thought of my preaching Controversy, if he had not been prepossess'd: and I am perswaded the Case was not singular. I may add, that an occasional Hearer of me at *Iroom*, went home, and told his Neighbour, that Mr.

I had preach'd the best Sermon, or one of the best, he ever heard: but a few days after, hearing that I was an *Arian*, he profess'd a Concern to the same Person (my Informer, tho' vehemently orthodox) that he should think, or say so, when, all the while, I was preaching *Arianism*: and yet, as I was also inform'd, some understood me as preaching in opposition to *Arianism*. I have been careful to say myself what is clear, and consistent, without unnecessary Declamations against others, for what they think, and say, in the Integrity of their Hearts. If I have animadverted on any for their Mistakes, it has been very seldom, and transiently, and when I thought I could not well avoid it. I have abhorred making personal Reflections: nor do I know a severer Instance of any sort that has dropt from me, than what follows. Preaching on *Mark x. 14.* *Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God:* I said, "We have here a Declaration he [*Jesus Christ*] makes in favour of these little ones, whom "his Disciples despis'd; as many since have thought "it a necessary part of Christian Vertue, to represent 'em (contrary to this and other Scriptures, and "the common Sense of Mankind, which esteems "them Innocents) as Objects of their Maker's Hatred, and fit Subjects of the Devil's Kingdom, for "being as he made 'em, and NOT as he first made "Adam." Hence a Report was spread of my asserting, *That Infants were as clean as Adam in Paradise*; which I myself did not hear of, till almost three years after. I have hitherto studiously avoided the Ways of speaking us'd by Disputants; but especially School-Terms and Phrases: even such Words as *Inferiority*, and *Subordination*, have not, I am perswaded, been once heard from me in the Pulpit, with relation to the present Controversy; much less, such as *Co-equal*, *Coessential*, *Coeternal*. For, as when I speak I would be understood, so I had rather use one plain Word, than need many to explain a hard one: and I can't tell how many I should need, to make some in the Country know the Meaning but of one of those mention'd, *vis. Coessential*, who yet are passionately in love with the Sound of it. A Discourse of an hour long about it, might, indeed, be as edifying to them

as *Latin Sentences*, to the use of which, I have been formerly advised, to shew my Learning: nor have I had a mind to explain such a Word as *Person*, which needs no Explication to those who understand *English*, by the Word *Subsistence*, which I could not explain, because I did not understand it.

Thus I have, in my own Opinion, been preaching the Gospel in its Purity and Simplicity, and in plain Scripture-Language, without engaging in wrangling Disputations, and *Strifes about Words*. And I am apt to think, that some who have condemned me for preaching Controversy, would have been more favourable to me, if I had really preach'd it in their own way; since I am credibly informed, that a Gentleman thus employing his Talent with great Diligence, and (after High-Church Example) zealously aspersing his Protestant Brethren, and *laying to their Charge things that they know not*, particularly the Popish Doctrine of Merit; passes for an uncommon Man (as I hope he is in respect of other Ministers round about him) by those People, whose Years were too tender to endure such preaching of Controversy as Mr. Sanden's, who was once their Minister. I could yet, even after the publication of this, act such a part myself: but then I must be known to make a Sacrifice of my Integrity. This, in me, would be not only *Iniquity*, and *Injustice*, but *speaking Lyes in Hypocrisy*, from a *seared Conscience*; and, whatever Allowance may be reasonable in some Cases, I should be as inexcusable, and self-condemn'd, as I must needs think a late Neighbour to have been, (of whom I have more to say) particularly when he preach'd his Farewell Sermon, Oct. 23. 1720. Had I on such hard Terms frequently declared, *That the Father and the Son, in the blessed Trinity, were two distinct Persons, but coessential*; and sounded an Alarm against those called *Arians*, this would have been called *contending for the Faith*; tho, instead of attempting to convey a Meaning with the word *Coessential*, to those who had none, I had only taken away what Meaning they had from the word *Person*, without being so just as to give them another in the room of it; telling them, that by two distinct *Persons*, I did not mean two distinct *Substances*, but two distinct *Subsistences*; or, (which would be

be the same thing) that I did Not mean Beings, Modes, Attributes, or Relations, without telling them what I Did mean. If I would talk at that rate, my old Friend, who now thinks me fit for a Trade, might be again my Hearer, as thinking me fit for what I am. I know the time when he offered to be so every Lord's-day; if I would but preach up his Notion about Perseverance, as he told me another had done. He might mean, perhaps, if I would always preach something or other as agreeable to him as that would be. But so little mind had I to preach Controversy, and what, in me, would have been something worse; that I did not accept it. My Controversy has been, and is with the Devil and all his Works, which I must unweariedly maintain in the Pulpit, (and out of it) till my Warfare is accomplish'd; tho' I sometimes procure Ill-will by it, from those who think I point at them, even when I don't think of them, if I so much as know that they are present, otherwise than upon the occasion of their Complaints afterwards. Thus, a Prophaner of the Lord's-day, by travelling about his worldly Business, happening on his Journey to hear me preaching up the strict Observation of it, was angry with me, and not with himself; and another was offended at my Doctrine about plucking out the Right-Eye, and cutting off the Right-Hand, as thinking I meant such an Application of it to him, as I dare say was far enough from my own Thoughts.

2. THAT I made a Tour through the County of Devon, to spread Arian Notions, with the specious Pretext of promoting a Catholick Spirit; and that I am continually riding up and down the Country on the same Design. It is fact, that I did once take a Journey so far as Plymouth. The Journey itself, as of such a length, was according to a Custom advantageous to my Health, begun many years ago by the Advice of Dr. Cotton, a Physician yet living. That which determin'd my Motion as above, in 1718. was (besides Acquaintance with Ministers at Exon, the Reverend Mr. More, Mr. Hall, Mr. Gilling, and some others of that County, whom I hoped to see) a regard to obliging Invitations given me by the Reverend Mr. Emry (formerly my Fellow-Student, as were others

at Plymouth) Mr. Savery, his Brother-in-law, and the Reverend Mr. Eveleigh. I am sure, that unless a Gentleman of St. Mary Ottery (with whom I had no Conversation at that time) knew more of my Heart than I do, I did not undertake that Journey with the least view at propagating any Notion at all; and that what I said on an unexpected Occasion, (given me, and not sought by me) was really according to the manifest natural Tendency of it, and to my Profession, (which the Gentleman was pleased to call a *specious Pretext*) of the great and good Design, tho very much discouraged by too many, of promoting a Catholick Spirit. To the Injustice of this particular Asperſion, it was easy to add that of the general one, which I here declare to be as entirely false and groundless as the other; since (whatever Notions are call'd *Arian* by such a Writer as Mr. Cl—r, who does not, or by those who do, understand the state of the Controversy) I know of no Fact which might justly, in the least measure, contribute to the support of it; and think, the same thing might as truly have been said of any other Minister in the County, as of me.

3. THAT I refus'd to baptize a Child, giving this Reason for it, *That Infants had no more Sin than an Hobby Colt*. I may have said, that Horses and Turkey-Cocks had a Disposition in them, like to that which we call Pride in our own Race; but neither did, nor do I think it a just Consequence, that because 'tis no corruption of their Nature, 'tis none of ours. I have advis'd to the delay of Baptism, that it might be publick, and said, that if an Infant should by that means happen to die unbaptiz'd, I did not think its Salvation would be hazarded by it; since, notwithstanding the Sin of Adam, and Corruption of Nature, (which I have upon all occasions acknowledged) *of such is the Kingdom of God; and that they had not committed Sin, which is a Transgression of the Law*. But I never used such an Expression as that which has been ascribed to me; or said, that Infants had no Corruption of Nature. I had the first notice of this Asperſion from Andover, at the distance of 40 Miles from the place of my Abode, about Sept. 1719. which was within thirteen Years after the Occasion was taken for it; nor was Industry wanting to spread it, both in these Parts,

Parts, and at other considerable Distances, besides that mentioned. Being at *Taunton*, I was informed, that a certain Gentleman, of that Town, had reported this, with other things equally true; v. gr. that I had acted from Prejudice against Mr. *White*, then Minister in my Neighbourhood, for changing his Opinion: (of which after.) I immediately took the Opportunity I had of discoursing with him; he then telling me, that Mr. *White* had been his Informer, as to what concerned himself, and Mr. *White*, after my return, denying that Fact, I wrote to Mr. *Walter*, (which is the Gentleman's Name) as follows:

S I R,
 " Mr. *White* denies, that what you reported at
 " *Taunton*, was from him; but yet I don't
 " think you the Author of it; nor shall, till I can't
 " help it: which, I hope, will never be the Case.
 " I request you, however, in justice to me, as well
 " as to yourself, to acquaint me, in a Line, who was
 " your Informer, if Mr. *White* was not, as I under-
 " stand he was; which will oblige

Your Humble Servant,

Asbweek, Oct. 27. 1719.

N. Billingsley.

I DID not think it necessary to mention the Report itself, there being but one which, as I remember'd, he ascribed to Mr. *White*: but, misunderstood as I was, he obliged me with the following Answer; in which, whilst he condemn'd me, he put me into a way of clearing myself: and now publish'd, it will shew the need of my doing it.

S I R,
 " I Never told you that it was Mr. *White* that infor-
 " med me of it, but of the Truth thereof I am
 " very well satisfy'd, having the Testimony of so
 " many credible Witnesses: if it were necessary, I
 " could mention very many, who have heard from
 " you Sentences of the like Import: however, for
 " your satisfaction, I have heard of it from Mr. *Byri's*
 " Family, of *Shepton*, and many other, whom I could
 " mention, both at *Coleford* and *Tobster*. The Person
 " to whom you spake it, was Mr. *Josiah James's* Wife,
 " your

" your Sister-in-law, who will, I doubt not, own it
 " to you. I never had it from Mr. W. but I do ad-
 " mire, that you should write to me about a thing
 " that is so manifest to so very many in your Parts.
 " I hope I have satisfied you, and am,

Yours to command,

Taunton, 8ber 30. 1719.

John Walter Jun.

IN reply, I return this Gentleman Thanks for giving me the first notice of one Ear-Witness against me: nor do I to this day understand, that any such Witness has ever been pretended to, except this Relation, and her Husband, who do me Justice in the following Certificate.

Nov. 30. 1719. " IN contradiction of a false and
 " abusive Report, industriously and maliciously spread
 " by that Incendiary ——— and others; We hereby
 " certify, that Mr. Nicholas Billingsley, of *Ashweek*,
 " our Brother-in-law, never said in the hearing
 " of both, or either of us, *Tbat Children, or In-*
 " *fants, had no more Sin, or corrupt Nature, than*
 " *an Hobby Colt*, and that he never refused to baptize
 " our Child, or Children, upon that, or any other
 " account. We also attest, that it was near thirteen
 " years ago, when Mr. Billingsley said, and we repor-
 " ted, what he did say; whence occasion was taken
 " for this Abuse: tho we never said he did say as is
 " now reported, but on the contrary have, when there
 " was occasion, said he did not say it."

Josiah James.

Elizabeth James.

I PRODUCED the former part of this Certificate (that being all I at first had) at a Coffee-house in *Shepton-Mallet*, and it was read there to several Gentlemen, Mr. James Birt (who had obliged me with the first notice of the Report, by repeating it at *Andover*) being one of 'em. A certain Person came thither, whom I had reprov'd for Backbiting and Slander, long before I could charge him with it in my own Case, and now desir'd to speak with in company, upon an Information I had had from Mr. William Provis, then present, that he had told him, he wou'd swear to the Story of the Hobby Colt. He then said, he would swear, that my Sister-in-law, whose Integrity

he asserted, did tell him as was reported. Upon sight of the Certificate, he had the face to insinuate, that her Hand was forg'd, and to talk to me as to one whom nobody would credit in what I said; which was to expose himself, more than he could me: and I dare say, his near Relations, who are also mine, tho prejudiced against me by such as he is, would by no means justify him in it; nor could they, without contradicting the Declarations which they have constantly made in my favour. The Testimony of this "credible Witness," I own, was then against me in this Case, as it was in loud Report against Mr. William Miller, another Minister, (at second-hand too) for swearing; tho, besides what may ordinarily be offer'd in defence of one's self against Injuries of this kind, I had long before produced on behalf of that Gentleman, the Testimony of one, who had profess'd to be an Ear-Witness against him, till upon the description and sight of him, she declared, that the Person swearing was not only another, but in Bulk and Stature exceeding different from him. This credible Witness then also told me, as he had before told it all the Country over, that he (and six or seven other credible Witnesses) would swear, that Mr. White said in his Confession, when ordain'd, That GOD created Jesus Christ to be his Son, and by his Existence created the World; tho I myself, Mr. Bowden, Mr. Sanden, and other Ministers, and People, are as sure, that he said no such thing, as that we did not say it ourselves. The Person referr'd to in the Certificate, is also, (no doubt) a very credible Witness against me; tho as the rest (except as above) in this, and other things, always behind my back: the Relations mention his Name, which I have omitted, from such a regard to him, as makes me loth to oblige him in his Vanity; especially, since I think the Obligations of that nature, which he has already receiv'd from my Friends, are more than he can well bear. He has, indeed, in the space of about thirty years, sufficiently improv'd the Talent with which Satan has furnish'd him, and may, so far as the Knowledge of him reaches, amongst those who will give every one his due, pass for as great a Man as he who burnt a Temple, that he might be taken notice of in the World,

Miller
see p 100
middle
p 102
middle

World, and his Memory be preserv'd. He is pretty well known in the obscure Corner where he and I live; and my Wishes and Prayers are, that, through the Goodness of God, none may hereafter have occasion to curse the day in which they first knew him, for such Injuries as he never did to me, and as none can receive without their own Consent. His Life affords an Argument, that no Person is so meanly accomplish'd, as not to be capable, in some Cases, of being very mischievous, if his Heart be violently and continually bent that way. Since we are to *mark such as cause Divisions, and avoid 'em*, I hope the equitable part of Mankind will here bear with me, if, to make my Neighbours the more cautious, I give some brief Account of this, who is not the only Incendiary in the Kingdom. He belonged to a Dissenting Congregation at Coleford, not far from me, where liv'd successively, as Ministers, Mr. Henry Chandler, Mr. Joseph Standen, Mr. William Milner, and Mr. Richard White. Mr. Chandler, their first Minister, liv'd amongst them seven Years, but removed long before I came into the Country: some few yet living, I hope, still retain the Savour of his Name, and Fruit of his Labours. I have had abundant Assurances, *how holy, and justly, and unblamably* he lived, what regard he had to Sincerity, Conscience, and Honour, and the golden Precept of doing as we wou'd be done by; what an earnest, zealous, and successful Care he had to advance a Reformation, and the Power of Godliness over Men's Hearts and Lives. Such rational and christian, such generous and catholick Principles, as I have been pleading for, took early possession of his Soul, and were continually enlarging it to his dying day; and had that been delay'd a little by the wise Disposer, he would have let the World know, in another *Effort against Bigotry*, that he judg'd those Principles should be apply'd to one side, as well as to the other, in the present Controversy. Such a Character was no Security against the Ill-will of those of a contrary Spirit. He told me, but a little before his death, that he thought there was "not a worse-temper'd Man upon Earth," than the Person of whom I have been speaking; and that he had still by him a Narrative, which he had drawn up, of the Troubles he

had met with by his means, and an Acknowledgment under his own hand, of his ill Practices; both which, Mrs. Chandler, yet living, at the Bath, has told me she saw since her Husband's Death; as she herself remembers in some measure the Facts. Had this Man brought forth Fruits worthy of Repentance, how well had it been for himself and others! Mr. Standen, who was my Neighbour sixteen years, had, I believe, in proportion, much larger Experience of his Temper than his Predecessor, a Party being then form'd. I have been assured, that the late Reverend Mr. Turton, hearing but of a single Instance of his Behaviour towards him, said, he would humble such a Fellow to the Dust. He, and his Party, did not, I think, ever take either Mr. Milner, or Mr. White, for their Minister; but, upon the coming of the former, frequented other Assemblies; and, in the time of the latter, Mr. Turton was desired to set up a stated Lecture on Week-days at *Vobster*, about a Mile from *Coleford*, which after his Death (if not in the time of his Sickness) issued in the Settlement of a Congregation, and Minister there on Lord's-days. The Industry in blackening Mr. Milner for the supposed Guilt of Swearing, in spite of all Evidence to the contrary, and Mr. White for an Expression, which no Man of common Sense would use, or think of; gave Instances of the unjust Treatment which those Gentlemen met with from some, who did not, at that time, belong to the Congregation at *Coleford*: amongst whom the Man I have reason to think of, makes some figure. 'Tis about fourteen years ago, as I remember, that in regard to his Necessities, and at the request of Mr. Edward Norman, of *Leachams*, I procur'd him Employment amongst my Relations, which he has had ever since, and by that means a great deal of Time and Opportunity to exert himself in Practices agreeable to his Nature; a particular Narrative of which I have also drawn up, after Mr. Chandler's Example: which, if exposed to publick View, would (I dare say) be the opening of a much blacker Scene, than that with which that worthy Person was acquainted. I had no Opinion of the Man's Goodness, any more than of his Judgment, when I did him the friendly Office: but did not think him so bad, as I have since found him, and

and must now think him to be, whilst I sincerely desire and pray, that even now in his declining Age, he may, (by the Grace of God, with whom all things are possible) *be converted, born again, and become as a little Child.* As he was going, the first time, to his Employment of Wool-combing at my Wife's Father's, he called at my House; where, in my absence, she talk'd to him of the Goodness of Providence in taking care of him, and Mr. Norman's Kindness in shewing so much concern for him, notwithstanding the difference which had been between them on Mr. Standen's account. When gone, he shew'd a Resentment of this, by saying, *that Mrs. Billingsley was fit to go to the Mandlin's,* [a Place at the Barb where they keep Ideots] *for talking so to HIM.* A Man of his Temper might easily take Affronts from me too, tho I never design'd to give him any: but he knows, not only that I am less a Friend than he is to Brandy-Houses, but that I abhor Backbiting and Malice, even when I am not personally concern'd. I don't pretend to be myself an Ear-Witness against him, he has been so constantly upon the Reserve when I have been present: but I have many, and those whose Credibility is past dispute, to prove his being an Incendiary, and a *Sower of Strife and Discord among Friends and Brethren,* who before had *dwell'd together in Unity and Love.* I made good a Charge of this nature against him, at my House, Sept. 29, 1719. So that I know no reason that should oblige my Brother, who is his present Master, to beg his pardon, for telling him, *that he was as malicious as the Devil;* since he has known Facts enough continually to justify him in it: nor do I think him, and my other Brother, worthy of blame for the tenderest, the softest, and most engaging Expressions of Regret, for having once suffer'd themselves to be influenced and prejudiced against me by him. By deceitful Talk for Charity now and then, (when he might think there was no danger of his being hearken'd to, or believ'd in that) contrary to the general Drift of his Discourse at other times, he has made one, who is now deeply infected by him with the worst of Corruptions, (if Charity be the best of Graces) to believe that he (good Man!) errs on the charitable hand. If the Judgment that Person has pass'd upon himself,

himself, viz. that he is as bad, or even worse than he whom he has been so humble as to make his Guide, be just; the Affection I bear him is sufficient to make me very sorry for it, and earnestly to desire, that he may be *renew'd in the Spirit of his Mind*, and have such a pious and christian Disposition, as (I think) he had before I was the innocent occasion of his acquaintance with this Man, so successful to *destroy much good*.

ANOTHER Asperſion is, that I wrote a very unbecoming Letter to the late Reverend Mr. *Turton*, *reviling, and blaspheming*. I did write a Letter to him, on the same design with that on which the Reverend Mr. *Bowden* had paid him a Visit. I consider'd him as a worthy, good-temper'd Man, and my Friend, and suspected no ill of him; but did suspect, that he might be impos'd upon in Reports by some People, whom he did not know so well as their Neighbours did: and that the more, from an Account I had of some Passages in his Sermons on Lecture-days at *Tolſter*, particularly with relation to Morality; an abusive Report having been spread of Mr. *Milner*, then lately remov'd from *Coleford*, for having used the Word, tho in the comprehensive Sense. Mr. *Towgood*, then chosen Minister of the Dissenting Congregation at *Shepton-Mallet*, desired me to join with other Ministers in recommending his Labours to the Divine Blessing. I was pre-engaged to go to the *Bath* the day before that which was appointed for it, without a prospect of returning soon enough for that purpose: but, in the morning, before I took horse, I wrote, on a sudden thought that it was a seasonable Juncture. I sent the Letter inclos'd to Mr. *Towgood*, to be communicated by him as directed: 'twas well, that notwithstanding the haste I was in, I kept a Copy of it. The good Man was disgusted, which I can't account for, but from a Prepossession. I had never an answer from him by Letter, or Message; nor did I see him afterwards. But the Country was full of Clamour against me, and one Sentence was repeated to me, as what he understood to be a Declaration, that I would preach *Arianism* at *Aſtweek*, in opposition to what he preach'd at *Tolſter*; tho it was not in the least in my Thoughts. But I can't believe, tho once confidently told

told so, that he ever interpreted that Letter, (which, in my design, was full of respect to him) as some have done since his Death; tho that happen'd (to his gain, I doubt not) about *Midsummer*, 1717. The Original has ever since, upon occasion, been carry'd about the Country, and read, at least in part, with a Comment upon it, and particularly upon a late one, in order to prejudice my Hearers against me, and engage 'em to desert me. I am charg'd with calling Mr. *Turton* Devil, and Jesus Christ himself a Sinner, who must be judg'd as well as we; and the Charge is to be prov'd from the Letter, which is *verbatim* as follows:

Dear Sir,

" FINDING that an Engagement, previous to
 " the Receipt of Mr. *Towgood's* Letter, (with
 " which I cannot honourably dispense) is likely to
 " make it impracticable for me to join with you, and
 " others of my Brethren, in the Work of the day,
 " on which you will receive this; I can only assure
 " you, that you will have my hearty Wishes sent up
 " to Heaven, tho at a distance, that Success may at-
 " tend it. I as sincerely desire Mr. *Towgood's* Usefulness
 " at *Shepton*, as my own at *Ashweek*, and hope I
 " shall never be the least occasion of hindring it, but
 " always ready to further it, as much as in me lies.
 " I can truly rejoice, when any real Good is any where
 " done; tho others, and not I, have the honour of
 " being instrumental in it; and fear, that so very lit-
 " tle is any where done, and so few endeavour the
 " doing it, that all who do so, in any measure, had
 " need join Hearts and Hands. I am as much con-
 " cerned for Mr. *White's* Usefulness at *Coleford*, as for
 " Mr. *Towgood's* at *Shepton*; and for Mr. *Turton's* at
 " *Kabster*, as well as at * *Chilwood*. I think all three
 " better than myself, and doubt not but their Designa-
 " are worthy the Sacred Profession. *Paul*, *Apollos*, and
 " *Cephas* were one: nor did they encourage the divi-
 " ding Cry at *Corinth*, (1 Cor. i. 12, &c.) We find

* The Place where the People assembled, who had Mr. *Turton* for their Pastor.

" the

" the first of these very apprehensive, that such Di-
 " visions were Marks of Carnality, and opposite to
 " the design of the Ministry, and especially beating
 " down the Faction, that had set him, instead of
 " Christ, at their Head. *Is Christ divided? Was Paul*
 " *crucified for you? or were ye baptiz'd in the Name of*
 " *Paul?* I doubt not, but you have a good measure of
 " *Paul's Spirit*, and are of his mind, when he preach-
 " ed not himself, but *Christ Jesus the Lord*, and *
 " *determin'd to know nothing but him crucify'd*. I ea-
 " sily persuade myself from your known Character,
 " that you would not by any means encourage the
 " *Works of the Flesh*, instead of those of the *Spirit*; or
 " think your Ministry successful, when you are ad-
 " mir'd, and the Product of that Admiration is no-
 " thing better than wrathful Contempt of your infe-
 " rior Brethren. I doubt not the Sincerity of your
 " Declaration to Mr. Bowden, that you would by no
 " means discourage the Young-Man at *Coleford*; nor
 " can I doubt your Readiness to strengthen his hands
 " for the Service of our common Lord: and I believe
 " no Man is more capable of doing it than you, on
 " the knowledge of the true State of the Case. *Lying*
 " *for the Truth*, has (to my knowledge) been so much
 " the practice of some People, that I have too much
 " reason to suspect, that you have been very much
 " abused by Misrepresentation: Others, I am sure,
 " have. I tremble to think of the Guilt contracted
 " this way, by some who wear a face of Religion.
 " We have no Preaching, that I know of, but practi-
 " cal; Sincerity towards God and Man; Humility,
 " and Charity, on Gospel-Motives; Necessary of
 " Good-Works, and Diligence, with dependance on
 " the Grace of God, disclaiming all Merit, and look-
 " ing for the Mercy of God in Christ unto Eternal
 " Life: This will not do. I don't know that I ever
 " used the word *Morality* in the Pulpit. Mr. Milner,
 " once at least, used it at *Coleford*, in a Sermon which
 " I after heard him preach at *Ashweek*, on *Phil. i. 27*.
 " *Let your Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of*

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. *The Text on which Mr. T. first- and for some time preach'd the Lecture at Vobster.*

" *Christ.* To me it was as practical a Discourse as
 " most I have heard. Such was the Drift of it, that
 " they must want common Sense, or common Honesty,
 " who, from a single word, represented him as a
 " meer Preacher of Morality, in the narrow Sense of
 " the Word. Nothing could be more evident, than
 " that by *Morality*, he meant a Conversation becoming
 " the Gospel, or Obedience to the whole *Moral*
 " Law, on Christian Motives. I once preached, at
 " *Coleford*, a single Discourse on those Words, *Behold*
 " *he cometh with Clouds*. I question whether I had
 " more than half a dozen Sentences on the Doctrinal
 " Part: the rest was nothing but practical Inferences,
 " managed in the most practical manner. Great
 " fault was found with it by some of your now Admirers,
 " because under one Inference [which was to
 " this effect, *What a difference will there be between the*
 " *second Coming of Christ, and his first Coming?*] I had
 " this Sentence, *His BODY at first was naturally vile*
 " *as ours*, TEMPTING DISPOSITIONS TO SIN EX-
 " CEPTED: *but then 'twill appear a glorious Body.*
 " What! Christ's Body naturally vile as ours! *Mon-*
 " *strum horrendum!* I only give you a Specimen, how
 " Opinions and Facts are, and may still be, represented
 " by such Carpers. I leave you to consider,
 " whether, at this rate, a Man can read *Psal. xiv. i.*
 " without incurring the Charge of Atheism. I have
 " often desir'd Mr. *Standen* to repeat his Sermons
 " represented as railing, and found them so, only as
 " Christ's and his Apostles were, against reigning
 " Vices; Pride, Malice, and Uncharitableness, Lying
 " and Sensuality. And when you come at *Vobster*
 " to insist much on such Subjects, (and you may
 " depend upon it, there is Cause more than enough)
 " I wish, *THEY, who now call you an Angel, don't call*
 " *you a Devil*, or desert you at least. I can truly say,
 " that I love a sincere, modest, humble, pious Character
 " as heartily as I do one of the same Character of my own
 " Persuasion. I think it much more
 " worth my while to labour the Advancement of
 " such a Christian Spirit, than the gaining of Proselytes.
 " But I will not be always a dumb unactive
 " Spectator of the Flames kindled in my near Neighbourhood,
 " by Oil brought from *Coleford*. I have been
 " so

" so too long already. I have certain and frequent
 " Intelligence, of late especially, of the advancing
 " Efforts of Bigotry. Practical Christianity is forgot-
 " ten ; devilish Wisdom is boasted of, " as holy Zeal
 " for promoting the Truth : a wicked Man must not
 " pray ; he affronts his Maker if he does. 'Twas
 " Mr. *White's* Lye, when he said publickly, that
 " whatever Christian Perfection a Man has attained,
 " he had need be watchful, because liable to *
 " Miscarriages." From the Dissenting Tories, Church
 " Tories catch this, and improve it thus, " Our Mi-
 " nisters, 'tis true, will swear, and be drunk ; but
 " theirs will lye, by their own Confession." Further,
 " Mr. *White* is but fit to be a Clark." At another
 " time, " He has only natural Parts ; but wants the
 " Gifts of the Holy Spirit : but Mr. *Turton* is an
 " Angel." But 'tis manifestly an *Angel of Darkness*
 " which bears the Sway, tho transform'd into an *Angel of*
 " *Light*. I consider You as a SWORN ENEMY to
 " His Kingdom ; and depend on it, that you will
 " not misinterpret this Alarm. I am, in great haste,
 " (going a Journey) Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate FELLOW-SERVANT
 in our Common LORD,

Assweek, Oct. 24. 1716.

N. Billingaley.

5. I have been represented as one making Distur-
 bances, and Divisions in Churches. I love my Ene-
 mies so well, that I should be very glad, if they had
 no more of that nature to answer for than I have. Let
 the Truth, and the whole of it be told, and I need
 no more. I may have a just Indignation against In-
 cendiaries, and Dividers, and express it, as the Case
 requires, without being one myself. The Man of
 whom I have taken some notice, tho concealing his
 Name, at a time when I met some of my People,
 [not *Sept. 29. 1719.* but a little before it] and he
 came also amongst them, was pleased to extol me for
 my great Usefulness in times past, and to tell me, I
 had been a Father to the Churches. What his De-
 sign was, he knew ; and I guess'd at it. I take no
 such Honour to myself : but hope, there is as little
 Change in me for the worse, as, I think, there is in

* That is the Word in my Copy ; tho perhaps 'twas mistaken
 for miscarry. him

him for the better ; and that I have not less Disposition to do what Good I can in the World than I had, notwithstanding Instances of Difingenuity, which I have sometimes met with. I have had blame for a Division in another County ; as to which, I need only to say, that having requested the Gentleman concerned, to let me know wherein he thought I deserved it, he did so by Letter : in answer to which, I offer'd him undeniable Evidence from Facts, in the order in which they happened, that my Conduct was unexceptionable, becoming a Christian, a Minister, and his Friend, all Circumstances consider'd ; and tho more than half a year has past since these Letters were exchanged, I have had no Reply, or fresh Charge. I have, perhaps, more than others, interested myself in the Affairs of some poor Congregations in my Neighbourhood, who will, I hope, *forgive me this Wrong* ; since, as I did not act undesir'd, their own Advantage has been consulted in it, they themselves being Judges. Divine Worship is constant in Places where it used to be but every other Lord's-day. They have been supplied with Ministers frequently from Places at the distance of twenty or thirty Miles, or more, not without Care and Difficulty ; and in case of sudden Emergencies, thro Disappointment, I have been at the expence of uncommon bodily Fatigue, to supply them in part myself. They have also been settled in Ministers, to their universal Satisfaction : this has been signified by them, respectively, in Letters I have received ; and I have, at least, one of them still in my possession, sign'd by the principal Person, and others of the Congregation at *Wicklane*, near the *Bath*, wherein they declare a Report to the contrary, one way or other convey'd to certain Gentlemen in *London*, to be utterly false and groundless ; and that it was at their repeated Request, that I procur'd a Minister for them, who was universally acceptable to 'em, not one, that they knew of, excepted ; and acknowledge my particular Care and Concern for 'em, from time to time, to have been the means of preserving their Interest, as a Christian Assembly, from sinking more than once : for which they return me their hearty Thanks. If some, in any Case, or Cases, have requited me Evil for Good, adding In-

justice to Ingratitude, I must not impute their Faults to People unconcerned in them, and ready, upon all occasions, to say, and do what is equal and right. A Clamour has been also rais'd against me in the Country, for making, or keeping up a Division, and ruining the Congregation at *Coleford*, by intruding Mr. *White*, as a Minister, upon them. The Facts were as follows. Upon Mr. *Standen's* Removal in 1714. (he, the Reverend Mr. *James Green*, now of *Shaftsbury* in *Dorset*, and myself being present) a fair Proposal was made to a principal Man of those who had in his time been Malecontents, of uniting in the choice of a Successor. It was at first yielded to, but presently rejected. In 1716. when it was known, that Mr. *Milner*, who had been the Minister at that Place about two Years, would also remove, a Proposal of uniting was again made, and rejected as before. When several Weeks, if not two entire Months, had pass'd from that time, Mr. *Bowden* and I, at the motion of some of the People, (who profess'd their Desires that another Minister might quickly be settled amongst them, as fearing that, otherwise, their Interest would sink) and consulting with others, as there was opportunity, concurr'd in sending for Mr. *White* out of *Devonshire*, to preach there a Lord's-day, on a further view. After we had his answer, wherein he engaged to come, we receiv'd each of us a Letter, the same exactly (*mutatis mutandis*) admonishing us not to act in that matter, and telling us, that they of the Congregation at *Coleford* had already fix'd on a Minister to unite them: but, as this was an absolute Falshood, so, tho the Language was plural, and as from a Body, there was not so much as a single Name subscribed. Mr. *White* came as a Stranger first to my House, and I shew'd him the way to *Coleford*. This was all I did. The People unanimously center'd in him: I took notice of this Unanimity in the Charge I gave him at his Ordination, almost a Year after his Settlement, (*viz.* as I think, in Aug. 1717.) for which I have been censur'd by the Backbiters; who should have understood, that I did not mean by the People *there assembling*, to include those who did not there assemble. By the way, they have also censur'd me for not giving that Gentleman strict warning of the dan-

danger of Unfaithfulness. Integrity was the Subject on which I much insisted : I was then far from suspecting his; but yet, on so solemn an Occasion, I endeavour'd, in the discharge of my own Conscience, to stir up his Mind, which I believ'd to be pure, by way of Remembrance; particularly, in the conclusion of all : which was in the Language of that glorious Lord, before whose righteous and impartial Tribunal, he and I must shortly appear; viz. that if he should be found insincere, and unfaithful, it had been good for him, if he had not been born.

I have not been more aspersed upon the account of my appearing for Mr. White, when I knew him to be injured, and his Usefulness struck at; than I have been, by his means, for appearing against him, when I knew him to be injurious to others, tho abundantly less than to his own Soul : which brings me to the last Article, which that Gentleman has even compelled me not to omit; tho I at first intended to say no more than I have said at the beginning of this Appendix.

6. That I have persecuted Mr. White; or, in acting the part I have acted against him, given vent to Prejudice and Malice, upon the account of Opinion. This was current at Taunton in *Devonshire*, and sent to London, when it was very much a Secret nearer home. Under the general are included two very different Aspersions, from the same Original. 1. That the Prejudice was for his not being so zealous a Stickler for certain Notions, as I would have him be: which must suppose, that they were his own Notions, as well as mine. And, 2. That it was for his having chang'd his Opinion about them. The last mention'd was the first I heard of; and the complaint of that, when I had heard it, as above, page 96, from Mr. Walter, was the occasion of my hearing the other. Mr. White never insinuated either of them to my face, nor was it to his purpose, in the company of those who could no more believe any thing of that nature, than he could himself. As the Report goes, I took occasion for such Treatment of my Neighbour, from what he had said to his Child in Leading-strings, calling him a notorious Lyar for it; and from what he had done formerly, when a School-boy.

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To entertain such a Design as is here supposed, and take any occasion to serve it, is to be vile indeed. If I am guilty, my Conscience must be dreadfully fear'd if it does not terrify me; and those very Christian Principles, for the defence of which, I have, upon all Occasions expos'd myself, and the Words I myself have spoken, *will judge me at the Last Day.* But, as *my Heart condemns me not, I have Confidence towards God:* and let any Man, if he can honestly, witness against me, if I lye, when I say that I am not guilty. I will never shun the Light, by which I may be tried: and if it be fairly proved, that this Account given of me, is no Asperision, let me be cast out of the Ministry, the Church, and Human Society, and my Name be hateful, till my Repentance be as publick and manifest as my Crime. But if I can clear my own Innocence, and theirs who are Partners with me in suffering this Wrong, and prove that our Accuser himself could not be ignorant of it; I need not say what the Consequence must then be.

THE first notice I had of what Mr. *White* said to the Child, (whether Truth or Falshood) was from *Taunton*, in a Letter bearing date *Sept. 26. 1719.* which inform'd me of the Asperision there spread as above; and yet this was many Months after I had been concern'd in drawing up Charges, and Evidences from Facts to support them, against him: and a Design to make any Facts, before he was Minister at *Coleford*, the Matter of a Charge, or Charges, in the Hearing we desired, was, upon all occasions, expressly disclaimed, and care taken to prevent the Necessity of so much as mentioning 'em at such a time; and that they were ever at all known in this Country, was through Mr. *White's* own fault, (and not ours) viz. that of betraying the personal Secrets of another. His Character is very different from what we thought it to be, when we took him for an honest Man: but he must be sensible, that, whatever his Opinion then was, we do not yet believe that he has changed it, or made a credible profession of such a Change: nor did he make any profession at all of it, till (as he knew) long after we had chang'd our opinion of his Morals, (on better Grounds than were desirable) had faithfully reprov'd him, and appear'd against him as

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an injurious Person; and had been for that, and nothing else, counted, and treated by him as Enemies. Nay, here (I dont say in *Devon*) he made contrary Professions, viz. That he had not changed his Opinion, long after our Charges had been drawn up, and an Opportunity to produce 'em sought in vain, and a distinct Account of this whole Affair sent to *London*. And I know the Gentleman, who, *July 15. 1719.* upon asking him, whether it was lawful for him, or any one else, to make People believe, that he was not of those Opinions which really he was of, was surpriz'd to be put by him upon the proof, that it was not lawful.

As for the other pretended Ground of Prejudice against Mr. *White*, viz. his not being so zealous a Stickler for what he has called *New Notions*, as I and my Friends would have had him be; I am perswaded, he never heard himself blam'd by any one for this, tho I once blam'd him for unnecessary Forwardness in discourse about 'em, on occasion of the account he himself gave me of what had passed between him and the Reverend Mr. *Powel*, (now of *Barnstable* in *Devon*) at Dr. *Cotton's*, in *Warminster, Wilts.* This was in, or near *Aug. 1717.* If I mistake not, I had then the first Declaration from him, what were his particular Sentiments in the matter of Controversy, tho he had then been almost a year at *Coleford*. I was never inquisitive what they were; nor was my Respect for him founded on a suppos'd Agreement with me in them; much less on his being a zealous Stickler for them. I was one of the Assembly (equally composed, as I remember, of the reputed Orthodox, and others) that examined him. What satisfied the rest, satisfied me: and tho I have very lately been informed, that he has said, that the true Reason of his coming up to be examined by us, was, that he might not be examined in *Devon* about Opinions; the profess'd Reason, and all I had ever before heard of, was, that Mr. *Spark*, of *Moreton*, was ill, and he, and the People desired Mr. *White's* assistance; and therefore, that he might be examined sooner than he could be by the Assembly at *Exon*. Mr. *White* knows, from the free Conversation I have sometimes had with him on Subjects of Controversy, that whilst I

agreed

agreed with him in some things, I differed from him in others; and that in Points of difference, he was farther from those called Orthodox than I was: and that as to those wherein we agreed, I never gave him the least Intimation, that I desired he would, either privately or publickly, attempt to make Profelytes to them. He was to determine his own Conduct: nor did I ever advise him on that head; nor do I know, nor have I heard, that any one else ever did. And I am inform'd, by those who had more Opportunities of conversing with him than I, that he had Zeal enough, and to spare, for his Opinions, till it gave way to something else to serve a Turn, for which we blam'd him; tho never for a supposed Want or Abatement of the former Zeal. He knows, as far as one Man can know another, that the Principles, Dispositions, and Conduct of his old Friends, are just and catholick: nor can he produce a single Fact to the contrary. He has, indeed, ascribed the Prejudice of one of us, viz. Mr. E. Norman, of *Leeds*, against a certain Gentleman, to a Principle of Bigotry, when he knew that he himself had rais'd it, by revealing to him a Secret, with reference to a former Practice, and not a present Opinion.

He also knows, whatever his Talk has been of late, that we don't pretend to *Charity without Bounds*: we own, that we have had none for him, since he has thrown off the Mask, and appear'd to us what he is. If we *love the Lord*, we shall *hate Evil*, and *all the Workers of Iniquity*, whenever we know 'em, as he hates 'em. Still, indeed, we have the Charity to wish, and pray, that he may, by the Grace of God, repent, be converted, and saved, in hopes that it will be so; which yet, after such a prodigious Train of diabolical Practices, and Marks of a desperately harden'd Heart, and sear'd Conscience, are now bordering upon Despair.

I don't love to expose any Man needlessly, tho by speaking the Truth, and that fairly; but must submit to the unpleasing Task, when not only Justice to myself and injur'd Neighbours, but the Honour of God, and Religion, is concerned, as it is in detecting Impostures. It is not my design to lay all open, which would require a Volume; but I shall give
some

some account of our Conduct, and Mr. *White's*, requesting that the Order of Time wherein things happen'd, may be observed.

About *Midsummer*, 1718. Mr. *White* earnestly desiring me to employ what Interest I had in my Acquaintance at *Warrington*, where he was a Stranger, in order to his removal thither, and persisting in the Thought, after I had endeavour'd to dissuade him from it, the Issue was his preaching there a Lord's-day or two. I was for acquainting Mr. *Norman* with it, who had always been a most hearty and faithful Friend to him, and his Predecessors, would consider what was reasonable, and might, as much as any Man, be depended upon to keep a Secret. Mr. *White* was against it; but the Matter was quickly known to him, and a few more, by accident. Mr. *Norman*, considering the Juncture of Circumstances, and Mr. *White's* Declarations, and Engagements, (to me then unknown) of which he was the Messenger to the People, thought the Step was not fair, and has since acknowledg'd, that he had never such Confidence in his Integrity afterwards, as he had had before: But another part of his Conduct that Summer, had the whole of it been known, must entirely have ruined all manner of Confidence in him!

About half a year after this, he violently suspected him, from his sudden Talk in the Pulpit, and out of it, of acting an insincere part in that Juncture, wherein a considerable Contributor to his Maintenance, had threaten'd to desert him, on the account of what were called *New Notions*; and Mr. *Galpin*, then Minister at *Vobster*, was upon removal, which might give him Hopes of re-uniting his People with his own. Before, he would have the Laity industrious to propagate those Notions; but now he publicly declaim'd against ALL Talk about *New Notions*. This was taken notice of by some of Mr. *White's* Hearers, to one of his intimate Acquaintance, who said, I don't doubt but Mr. *White* will clear it up in the Afternoon. Mr. *White* himself was told, that People had misunderstood, or would misunderstand him, if he did not guard in the Afternoon; and think he intended to discourage all Enquiries about Truth, how sober and regular soever. Yet this Mr. *White* did not think fit

to do ; but went on preaching against talking of *New Notions*, which, as thus unguarded, might very well encourage such unjust Reflections on his Friends, as he himself had always blam'd. This increased in Mr. Norman the Suspicion of his Insincerity, tho not, in the least, that he had changed his Opinion. In Conversation with me afterwards, he apply'd what he had said in his Sermon, to some call'd Orthodox, who (as I had often complain'd) were continually talking warmly about Notions, to the Neglect of Practical Godliness. Being asked by others what he meant by such Discourse, and whether he did not mean to reflect upon those of his Friends, who were supposed to have what they call *New Notions* ; he was confounded, and would not for a long time give a direct Answer : one while saying, *he would not tell*, another while, *what if he did?* Then, if he did, 'twas but just, for he said it only with reference to the Neglect of Practical Godliness, which was Limitation enough. When he was told, that this was so far from an Excuse, that it look'd like a sly Insinuation, that his Friends did so to talk of it ; at last he said, *he did not mean to reflect on them*. He also declar'd about that time, that tho he could as little doubt of some Principles, as of Christianity itself ; yet, for the future, no body should know his mind about 'em : for then, if any one charg'd him with them, he could tell them they lyed, because they spoke what they did not know." And he said, he wou'd visit the Orthodox ; particularly, one of the Congregation at *Vobster*, and was told, he might have done it sooner with a better grace.

Mr. Norman, however, at that very time gave a noble Instance of his kind Concern for Mr. *White* and his Family. Being privy to Differences, which had been between him and his Wife, by Observation and Report, from one, or each of them, he advised them to be, at least, prudently cautious, that they might not be known abroad by a Servant removing, &c. He himself concealed them : nor did I ever hear of any, but upon the following Occasion. A Neighbour now told him, that they had differ'd exceedingly at his House for an hour or two together, using on both sides what he thought indecent Language. Notwithstanding

standing the distance that there was between Mr. Norman and Mr. White, the former, instead of making a malicious Improvement of this Fact, only told it to Mr. Stogdon and Mr. Foster, who soon after call'd at his House (as yet Mr. White's intimate Friends,) with a profession of his Fears what the consequence of such a Management might be, and requesting them to advise those concerned, to more Caution. They thinking it more proper for me to act that part, he engag'd them to oblige me to tell no Mortal of it, not so much as my Wife, but Mr. White and his Wife only; and to assure them, that I was laid under such an Engagement, and had kept it. They discharged their Trust, and I mine. For this Mr. White charged Mr. Norman with Villany, calling it a betraying Family-Secrets.

On March 18. 1718-19. Mr. Bowden, Mr. Stogdon, Mr. Foster, and myself, at Mr. White's desire, met him at Leachams, to hear what Mr. Norman and he had to charge one another with. An Account can be produced of all that pass'd. Mr. Norman made good his Charge of Insincerity against Mr. White: nor could, nor did any Minister present offer any thing which might clear him from it; tho every one would have been glad to have done it, had there appeared just ground for it: but Mr. White could make good no Charge against Mr. Norman. Indeed he call'd him Villain, as before, in betraying Family-Secrets: for which we all reprov'd him, telling him, that what he called Villany, was an Act of great Kindness. Tho Mr. Bowden highly blamed Mr. White, he did not express himself so freely as the rest of us did, for this reason, as he afterwards assured me, lest he should raise Mr. Norman's Prejudices higher than they were; and therefore, instead of that resolved to deal plainly with him alone. The Principle on which we proceeded, oblig'd us expressly to censure, at the very time, whatever appeared unchristian, in whomsoever it appear'd. After Mr. Bowden and Mr. White were gone, Mr. Stogdon and I, engag'd Mr. Norman to be silent among Mr. White's Friends about what had pass'd, and the Ground of his deserting his Ministry, as he had then resolved to do, till Self-Defence appeared to make it necessary. Mr. White began the

next day to give a very unfair Account of what had pass'd, and reported what a black and heavy Charge he had brought against Mr. Norman, viz. of Villany in betraying Family-Secrets.

If that Gentleman's Cause was good, and his Design just and honourable, his Management, from this time to that of his Departure from *Coleford*, (viz. Oct. 24, 1720.) was the worst, and most unsuitable that could be. But if he was conscious of Guilt, and knew that Facts could be alledg'd, and prov'd, to evidence it against him; and yet had rather contract a great deal more, than confess and be humbled for what was past: then, indeed, his way was to bear down the Complaints of the injur'd Person, by continual addition of fresh Injuries, to raise the Prejudices, and inflame the Passions of the People against him; in which case they would chuse, after the Example given them, to *swear* him with their own Tongues, rather than to *give heed to any of his Words*.

If Truth be stubborn, and will not serve the turn, something else must; and therefore hellish Arts are to be call'd in, to blacken the Man who was Mr. *White's* Accuser. His Value for Integrity, and Abhorrence of the Violations of it, are things which can't be directly spoken against; tho, as new apply'd, at the bottom of the Relentment: and therefore, he must be expos'd under the Notion (without Facts to support it) of a Lyar, a turbulent Fellow, and Incendiary; as the Christians of old were dress'd in the Skins of Wild Beasts.

It was also fit, upon such a Scheme, to load those with Reproaches, who were ready, upon all Occasions, to do him Justice, and desirous that it might be done him by others; and to call them the Reproachful and Abusive, Detractors, and Men of sharp Tongues; little Calumniators, diminutive Censurers, Scandal-Mongers, and Lords of the lesser Inquisition.

He might fear for himself, as some of his most zealous Friends (who could not deny, and have sometimes confess'd to me, and others, that they thought him guilty) did for him, the Consequence of a fair Hearing on both sides: that therefore must by all means be avoided, tho not without some Pretence; and when one is cut off, another must be thought of.

What better Course could he take to keep his People easy, than to keep them in the dark? All would be well, if he could, but prevail with them to close one Eye and one Ear, and give him the command of the other. In order to this, 'twas necessary to make them believe, that what any had to say against him, was not worth hearing, or fit to be heard.

These are the Methods he has taken; for after the Meeting at *Deanham*, wherein he was condemn'd by ALL, who yet were none but those whom he himself chose to be Judges of the Case; these Judges were called *Lords of the lesser Inquisition*, and represented as partial; Mr. *Bowden* only excepted, who was not (as has been said) so free in reproving him, but reserv'd what he intended for an opportunity in private. So that, from this time forward, Mr. *White* endeavours to blacken us, as well as Mr. *Norman*, where he hoped to be successful; tho, at other times, he would speak honourably of us.

Whatever Waites appear'd upon his Conscience at that Meeting, much greater appear'd afterwards. Every day almost gave fresh Discoveries, and Proofs of his complicated Wickedness. Our Charges against him were indeed of a very high nature; such as, of speaking Lyes in Hypocrisy; of solemn appealing to Heaven for the Truth of what he knew to be false; of Malice, and Slander; not scrupling to take Occasions for it from known and uncommon Expressions of a generous Concern to prevent his being injur'd, even in those who, at the same time, knew him to be injurious, and prejudiced against them; of Deceit and Treachery; of betraying the Secrets of his Friend, and clandestinely blasting his Reputation, upon no other ground than Faults committed by him when a *School-boy*, of which he himself appear'd to be no less guilty, &c.

We were ready to make good such Charges face to face, before neighbouring Ministers, and Mr. *White*'s Hearers, not excepting against any; and professing a desire that Mr. *White* might bring as many of either sort, as he pleased. But we thought ourselves concerned to make sure of some: and besides that Mr. *Bowden*, Mr. *Jones*, and Mr. *Towngood*, were the next Ministers in our Neighbourhood, I was resolv'd

(if

(if possible) to engage them all to be present, since I had, towards the conclusion of the foregoing Year, join'd with them in a Certificate, on Mr. *White's* Behalf, to a Body of *London* Gentlemen, in order to the obtaining Assistance for him as Minister of a poor Congregation. This made me think it expedient that they should all have a hearing of the Facts and Evidences, that they might form a Judgment of them, and we might afterwards consider together, what part it was our Duty to act.

Here was not, upon any account, the least need of Pretensions to Ecclesiastical Authority, or any Authority over Mr. *White*, more than he has over us, or than the meanest of the Laity have over us. If we injure them, and speak all manner of Evil of them falsely; and, instead of doing them right, persist in our Trespases against them; and private Reproofs have been used in vain; they may insist on being heard in their Charges against us before many Witnesses, and on having some publick Amends made them for publick Injuries. If they profess to charge us with scandalous Crimes, Ministers, and our People, when thus called to it, should be willing to hear, and consider the Proofs: and, as they must do us Justice, if it appears to them that we are abused; so, if the Proofs be strong, and clear against us, that we are *Workers of Iniquity*, they ought in honour to our Holy Religion and Ministry, to disown us, and in their Stations to discountenance our meddling with Sacred Things, unless the Profession, and Fruits of Repentance, taking Shame to ourselves, and a Care to do right to those we have injur'd, alter the Case. As it was my Judgment, that it should be so in such a Case, when I publish'd my Ordination-Sermon; so, I still think, it was the Apostle *Paul's*, when he wrote his Epistles to the *Corinthians*, who gloried in a Man whom he charged them to put away from among them. Dissenting Congregations have, I think, ordinarily observed this Method; and I am sorry that I have known an Instance to the contrary, as I was, to hear one of Mr. *White's* Friends say, as he did to me, whilst he acknowledg'd him to be a Lyar, that being a MINISTER, it was not fit he should confess his Faults to *Edward Norman*.

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We did our utmost to gain an Opportunity of being heard in our Charges against Mr. *White*. But it was all in vain: he was resolved we should have none. On May 11. 1719. He said he would meet the Ministers, provided Mr. *Norman* should not be present. Being told, that that was partial and unjust, and that it was necessary that *some*, at least, of the People should be present, as well as Mr. *Norman*; he then said, that if it were wholly in his Breast, he did not know but he might consent to it; but his People were against it. Upon this, I and two more went to the Houses of four or five of the principal of them, who all (tho one at first made Objections) agreed to it. All concerned could not be brought together; and therefore, they whom we had opportunity to consult, agreeing to it, we fix'd on May 19, at *Stokesbottom*. The time appearing too short, it was after put off to May 26, by concert with Mr. *Bowden*; and yet, through unforeseen Occurrences, the time so gain'd, prov'd shorter than we could have wish'd, for our purpose. No Care was wanting to engage Mr. *Jones* and Mr. *Towgood*; but one was absent on a Journey, and the other had a Journey depending; so that, when I met Mr. *Bowden* and Mr. *White*, on May 15, I could only tell them, that I hoped they would be at *Stokesbottom* the next day. Mr. *White* then insisted on positive Assurances: for want of them, I should have been glad to have the assembling of the People deferr'd; but, besides that it was not easily practicable, that Method had been taken once already, which might render it expedient now, at least, to meet, and consult with them. And Mr. *White* soon after said, that if other Ministers, besides those he objected against, were there, of which, he also said, he would take care to get Intelligence, he would come: tho, at the same time, he said, he had rather that there were no Meeting. Mr. *Bowden*, seeing his Aversion to it, and having occasion to go another way, excus'd himself, and was not there. I went the same day to *Page-house*, and endeavoured to engage the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Lucas*, who thought it prudential in him to decline it, as being of a different Persuasion in the Point of Infant-Baptism; tho the Gentleman with whom he liv'd, join'd his Instances with mine, for his coming. There, however, I met
Mr.

Mr. Towgood, in his return from a Journey, who promised to come; and Mr. Norman, who had engaged the Reverend Mr. Daniel Mace of Beakington. An Account of this was sent in a Letter to Mr. White, which he received early the next Morning, as follows:

S I R,
 "MR. Billingsley has, since he saw you, met Mr. Towgood, who has promis'd absolutely to be at the Meeting to-morrow, and to endeavour to bring Mr. Mace of Chippingham with him; and Mr. Mace of Beakington also believes he shall be there. Mr. Lucas has refused to come, tho Mr. Houlton persuaded him to it."

Mr. White had not objected against either of those Gentlemen. Mr. Towgood, and Mr. Mace of Beakington, did accordingly come, and several of the People, to Stokesbottom. From ten of the clock to twelve, we expected Mr. White, according to his Word the day before: at length came the following Lines from him.

"THIS is to satisfy any of my Friends and People now at Stokesbottom, that upon Mr. Bowden's and Mr. Lucas's refusing to come, and upon having no Assurance yesterday from Mr. Billingsley, that any Ministers would be there, or had promised to be there, besides himself, Mr. St—nd, and Mr. F—, I do protest against the Assembly as irregularly called, and refuse to be there, having had notice of the day, by Mr. Billingsley's Letter, no longer ago than last Saturday night; since which time I have not been able to engage Ministers as the Case requires, tho he then told me, I might engage as many Ministers, &c. as I pleased."

Richard White.

It was propos'd, that some other time might be fixed for a Meeting; that Mr. White might have more convenient Opportunity to engage whom he pleased to be present. A Gentleman of the Congregation objecting against it, that the Body of the People were easy, and did not desire that there should be any Meeting at all upon that Occasion; my Reply was in Words to this effect. "If

" If they that hear, and judge on the hearing of,
 " one side, will not hear the other, they must take
 " their liberty: but then it is fit, that they who are
 " willing, as well as concerned, to hear both, should
 " have Opportunity for it. I think it the fairest Me-
 " thod to say, and prove, face to face: but if that be
 " not allow'd in such a Case as the present, for my
 " part, how silent soever I have been hitherto, I
 " think it fair, just, and necessary, and shall, as
 " Judge of my own Actions, determine for the fu-
 " ture, upon all fit Occasions, to say what I think can
 " be proved, and speak my Mind as freely of Mr.
 " *White*, as false and injurious, as I have been ready
 " to do to him: I may thus speak the Truth in Jus-
 " tice." The same Gentleman said often, that Mr.
White would confess *Rashness and Imprudence*; and was,
 as often, answer'd, That there was no Design to charge
 him with any thing on those Heads; and that if any
 thing appear'd to rise no higher, it should be drop'd.
 It was after unanimously agreed, that at that same
 Place, and on the same Occasion, there should be a
 Meeting that day fortnight, viz. *June 9.* and Mr. *Town-
 good* and Mr. *Mace* resolv'd to be there: an Account
 of which, was immediately sent, in a Letter, to Mr.
White.

The next day I received a Letter from Mr. *Bowden*,
 wherein he tells me, that he should rejoice to hear,
 that the Conference ended in Confession, and Amend-
 ment, Love, Compassion, Forbearance, Forgiveness,
 Peace, and Reconciliation; and withal, that Dr. *Cala-
 my* (who had been at *Froom*) had desired him to ac-
 quaint me, that he was at the *Bath*. On *May 30.* I
 waited on the Doctor there: he had heard (tho I
 don't yet know from whom) somewhat of this Affair,
 and of the intended Hearing, and enquir'd of me about
 it. A LADY, present, ask'd, whether it was about
 Opinion; to which the Doctor answer'd, that it was
 something worse than that. I then said a little as
 possible; nor was Mr. *White's* Name mention'd. But
 being, afterwards, on the same day, with the Doctor,
 and the Reverend Mr. *Samuel Bates* of *Warminster*, the
 former made further Enquiries of me, and particularly,
 whether, having given Mr. *White* so good a Character
 to the Gentlemen at *London*, if I had now reason to

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think

think him another sort of Man, I was not bound in conscience to let them know it. I said, I had considered it, and thought I was, but would do nothing rashly; a Meeting was appointed, and if Mr. White could clear himself, or was penitent, the Case would be different from what it now appear'd to me. I requested him to say nothing of it at London, till he heard from me: he said, he would say nothing, upon condition, that I would promise him, to give him an Account of the whole Matter before the first Monday in September. I engaged, as the Doctor did; who also desired Mr. Bates, as I had done, to be present at the intended Meeting, on June 9, at Stokesbottom. He scrupled it at first, but consented afterwards.

I have particular Grounds to make it a reasonable Conjecture, that Mr. White, being informed of this, took care to prevent his coming. 'Tis certain, that care was not wanting, as to Mr. Towgood and Mr. Mace; who assured me, that he had positively declared he would not come himself; and to that purpose was his Letter to me, bearing Date, May 28; tho I did not receive it till after my Return from Barb. In this he tells me that his People were easy without a Meeting. I then wrote to him, not without close Applications to his Conscience, taking notice of his past Conduct, and shifting Pretences to avoid a Hearing, before he thought fit, as now, positively to refuse it; and told him what had pass'd at the Barb; and that, as things now stood, I intended, in a week from that time, to send to the Doctor an impartial Representation of what I knew to be Facts, and the State of the Case, that I might have his Advice. In his Reply of June 6, he starts a new Pretence, viz. that there had been three Meetings already; and says, that a guilty Person who is afraid of the Light, will never come to the Bar three times, when there is no Authority to compel him once. About a week or two after this, he did, in the hearing of several People, profess to think me to be a very honest Man, and that what I had done in his Case, was what I thought it my Duty to do: but that I was impos'd upon; wishing, that I had a right Understanding of the Matter. As this was in June, so in May, he had said the like of Mr. Stogdon, and Mr. Foster, viz. that they were sober and religious Men; tho,

tho, indeed, he then added, that they were extremely partial in this Case, like Mr. Ball and Mr. Walron in *Devonshire*; and that their's was as truly a Persecution of him, as their's was of Mr. Peirce: and persisted in the Assertion, tho told, and he could not deny it, that this was about Immoralities. The last time I saw him, which was in the following *July* of the same Year, I had occasion to mention what he had said in my favour a little before. He did not deny the Fact, or profess a Change of Mind; but put me on the proof, that he had said any thing to the contrary. Besides, somewhat he had then said, I instanced in his ranking me with Calumniators, and Scandal-Mongers, &c. in a Letter to Mr. W. Milner, then present. I have not so extensive a Charity, as he then expressed, in saying, that *I might be an honest Man for all that*. But if he had Charity enough to think me an honest Man mistaken, and that I only wanted a right Understanding of the Matter, it was pity he had not enough to help me to it; especially, when he knew how much I desired it.

In my Letter to him of *June 5*, amongst others, were these Passages; "I should be exceeding glad
" to find myself mistaken: but if I am, till you convince me of it, I can only assure you, that with my
" Soul I pity you, for the Shipwreck you have made
" of a good Conscience, which would have been your
" best Friend, and surest Guide through the World:
" and I would serve you to the utmost of my power;
" tho on no other than honourable Principles. If I
" was charged as you are, and conscious of my Innocence, I should not refuse an Opportunity to
" clear it. If I knew the Charge could be proved, I
" might do, as you seem resolved to do, unless I
" were penitent. If that be your Case, I wou'd most
" affectionately beseech you to consider, whether it
" would not be most for your Satisfaction, living and
" dying, to be so; penitent, I mean, and reform'd."

As for the *three Meetings*, which had been already, the first, was that at *Leachams*, *March 18*. of which an Account has been given. That which Mr. White is pleased to call a second Meeting, was *April 9th*, at *Froom*; private as the other, and not appointed for a hearing of Matters between him and Mr. Norman,

who was there accidentally. The only Design of it, was to prevent Mr. *White's* being injur'd through mistake; and to convince him, that it was so, he was desired to be there. Indeed an Account of what then pass'd, was committed to Writing, and sign'd by those present, Mr. *White* himself not excepted; and lodg'd in Mr. *Bowden's* hands, to be produc'd upon any just Occasion. I am sure, it would not be for Mr. *White's* Honour, or the clearing of his Innocence, if the Particulars were publish'd, which I have by me, unless an old Debt is cancelled by the Contracting a new one. Mr. *Bowden* (to say nothing of the rest who were present) had not a better Opinion of him afterwards; for he declared, April 21, "That he thought Mr. *White* had been guilty of gross Imprudence, "Insincerity, Prevarication, Malice, and Wickedness; "and would advise him to confess, and do Justice: "and if he was ashamed, he would exchange with "him, and preach to the People in such a way, as "to let them know, that Mr. *Norman* was not the "Knave; and so as they might put the most favourable Construction upon Mr. *White's* Conduct, in representing him so, as the Case would admit, viz. "That he (Mr. *White*) had now other Views of "Things: but that if Mr. *White* would not yield to "some Method to do Justice, and make up the "Breach, he should never more be able to look "upon him with Satisfaction, and should advise him "to go out of the Country." What Mr. *White* calls a third Meeting, was on May 25, at Mr. *Stevens's* of *Stokelane*. It was private: Mr. *Norman* was not there; nor was any one appointed to be there, besides Mr. *White*, and a Gentleman, whose Name I have not yet mentioned, Mr. *Bowden*, and myself. And this Meeting was Mr. *Bowden's* Expedient to prevent the more publick mention of School-boy Stories the next day at *Stokelaton*, which had been appointed for a hearing of Matters, which Mr. *White* refused to be at, as above.

After all, Mr. *White* reported that he could not get Mr. *Norman* to have a Hearing, upon no better Foundation than this, viz. That to me he made an Objection against the Meeting at *Leachams*, as apprehensive that Mr. *White* would prevaricate more and more
and

and maliciously resent his Plain-dealing with him; tho' that very minute he yielded to it, and we must accordingly, as has been related. Yet in *July 1720*, Mr. *White* declared, when speaking of Mr. *Norman*, that, "If he could prevail with the greatest part of the Congregation to have another Hearing, he should crave leave of them to use his own Will, and take his Liberty." Mr. *John Plummer*, the Person attesting this, tho' he never thought that any of us design'd to wrong Mr. *White*, was yet prejudiced in his favour, till what he himself observed, made him think it his Duty no longer to own him as a Minister; in which his Case was not singular. He did, about the beginning of *October, 1719*, by his Importunity, prevail with Mr. *Norman* (who is his Brother-in-law) for the sake of Peace, to drop a great many of his Charges: but no occasion was given for a Report that he had confess'd his Faults, or own'd that Mr. *White* had been wrong'd by him or others, so much as in a single Charge; his Mind and Profession being then the same they had been, as was soon after attested under Mr. *Plummer's* Hand.

What I actually sent to Dr. *Calamy* in *June 1719*, was an Account of our Proceedings, with Copies of Letters exchanged, renewing my Instances with him, notwithstanding the Alteration in the Case, to be silent about it, till he heard more from me. I did not know, nor could any one tell me upon enquiry, how to satisfy my Conscience, without discharging my Promise: I delay'd sending an Account of those Facts, which, had there been a Hearing at *Stokesbottom*, would have been prov'd, for the Support of such Charges, as those above-mentioned, against Mr. *White*, to the very last Post-day within the limited time, which was *September* the first: and then within a few days after that, a distinct Account of this whole Affair, (tho' not so distinct, as to include all the Facts which could, even then, have been produc'd and prov'd) was, according to my Promise, lodg'd in the Doctor's hands; and being so, is, with other things here offered, Evidence for me against the Aspersions of my acting from Malice or Prejudice, on the account of Opinion, particularly the Change of it. Having another Occasion to write to the Reverend Mr. *Tong*, I did also, by the same Post,

fully communicate to him my deliberate Sentiments, with relation to this melancholy Subject, as follows:

"I FING fully convinc'd, from the later Conduct
 "of Mr. *Richard White* of *Coleford, Somerset*, that
 "he is not the Man I took him to be, when I con-
 "ferr'd in a Certificate on his Behalf, about *Christmas*
 "last; I do, in the discharge of my Conscience, and
 "a Promise to Dr. *Calamy* about four months ago,
 "acquaint you, and the rest of the Gentlemen, who
 "are Managers of the Fund, with the unhappy Ne-
 "cessity I find myself under, of retracting what I
 "said of him, as to his Integrity. The Grounds of
 "my Conviction the Doctor has in his hands. I
 "judge only for myself, as I must give account of
 "myself to God. Regard to his Judgment, made
 "such a Declaration necessary from,

S I R,

Your, and Their, obliged humble Servant,
N. Billingsley.

In that very Month of *September*, Mr. *White* declar'd he had not chang'd his Mind, but for the future wou'd keep it to himself. In *October*, he deny'd that he had reported, that I, &c. had acted from Prejudice against him, for the Change of his Opinion; only own'd, he might say, that if he had been as zealous a Stickler for some Notions, as some would have him be, it would have made Atonement for his real and pretended Faults. In *December*, 1719-20, he said, that he had not told Mr. *Townsend*, or any one else, that he had chang'd his Opinion; but only, that he had changed from Bigotry to Moderation: tho his Prayers and Sermons had been always against Bigotry, as he was then told. But being closely charged with having profess'd Change of Opinion, and told, that one of the Village had offer'd to lay a Wager, that he had own'd, and would own it to any one; he thereupon, within a quarter of an hour after he had deny'd it, as above, said, *What if I did?* And after he went and told one of the Congregation at *Vobster*, that he had changed his Opinion. A few days before he preach'd his Farewell-Sermon, he said to this purpose, That as to the present Controversy, none knew what was right, and what was wrong about it; that he laid no Stress upon

upon it; and that there were good Men on both sides: and yet, in that Sermon, he vehemently disclaimed against those of one side, for espousing what he called *New Notions*, insinuating that they were in danger of *Deism*; without the least Hint of a penitential Confession of the late *Perverseness of his own Mind*, in espousing those very Notions. This indeed would have been besides the purpose of finishing the glorious Work he had been so long carrying on, of engaging the People against his and their old Friends: and such was the Success, that Mr. Norman hath, since his Departure, been mobb'd in the Street.

If any Facts here asserted, without mention of the Evidence, be question'd, they can be attested by Persons of unquestionable Veracity; such as never declin'd an Opportunity of hearing what Mr. *White* had to say for himself, as well as what others had to say against him, face to face: and such as were his zealous Friends, till personal Knowledge made their Change of Opinion concerning him, as unavoidable as ours was, who appear'd against him. But I may justly except against the Evidence of Testimonies, which may possibly, in opposition to the distinct, fair, and impartial Account here given, be procured on Mr. *White's* Behalf, from those People who are so imposed on, and prepossess'd, as not to be willing to hear on both sides. Some of them are now sensible of their Error in that respect, and are unexceptionable Evidence for me against him. Others are not yet sensible of it; and till they are, the mischievous Consequences of such Partiality are like to remain. *FINIS.*

Lately Published, the Third Edition of,

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